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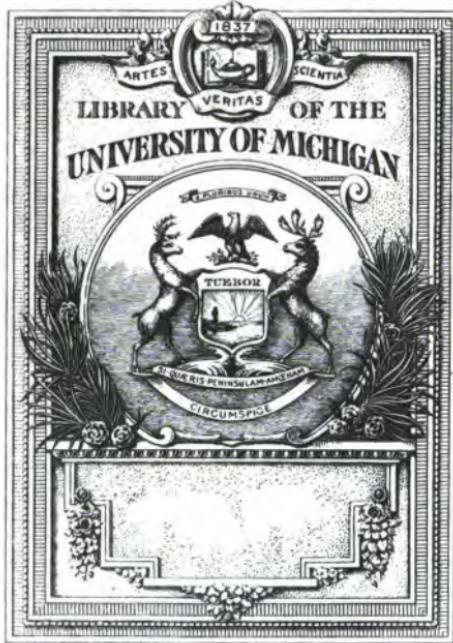
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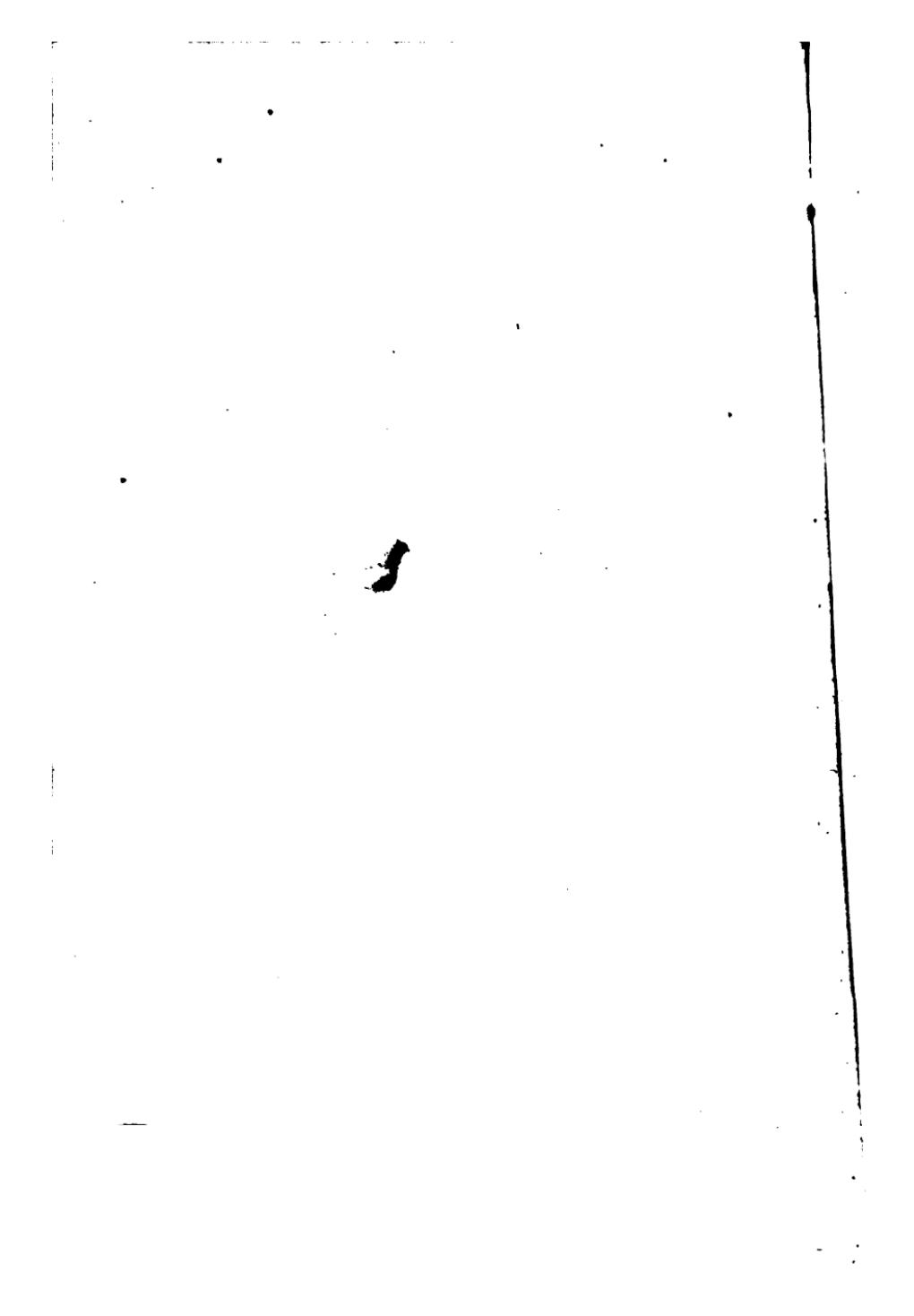
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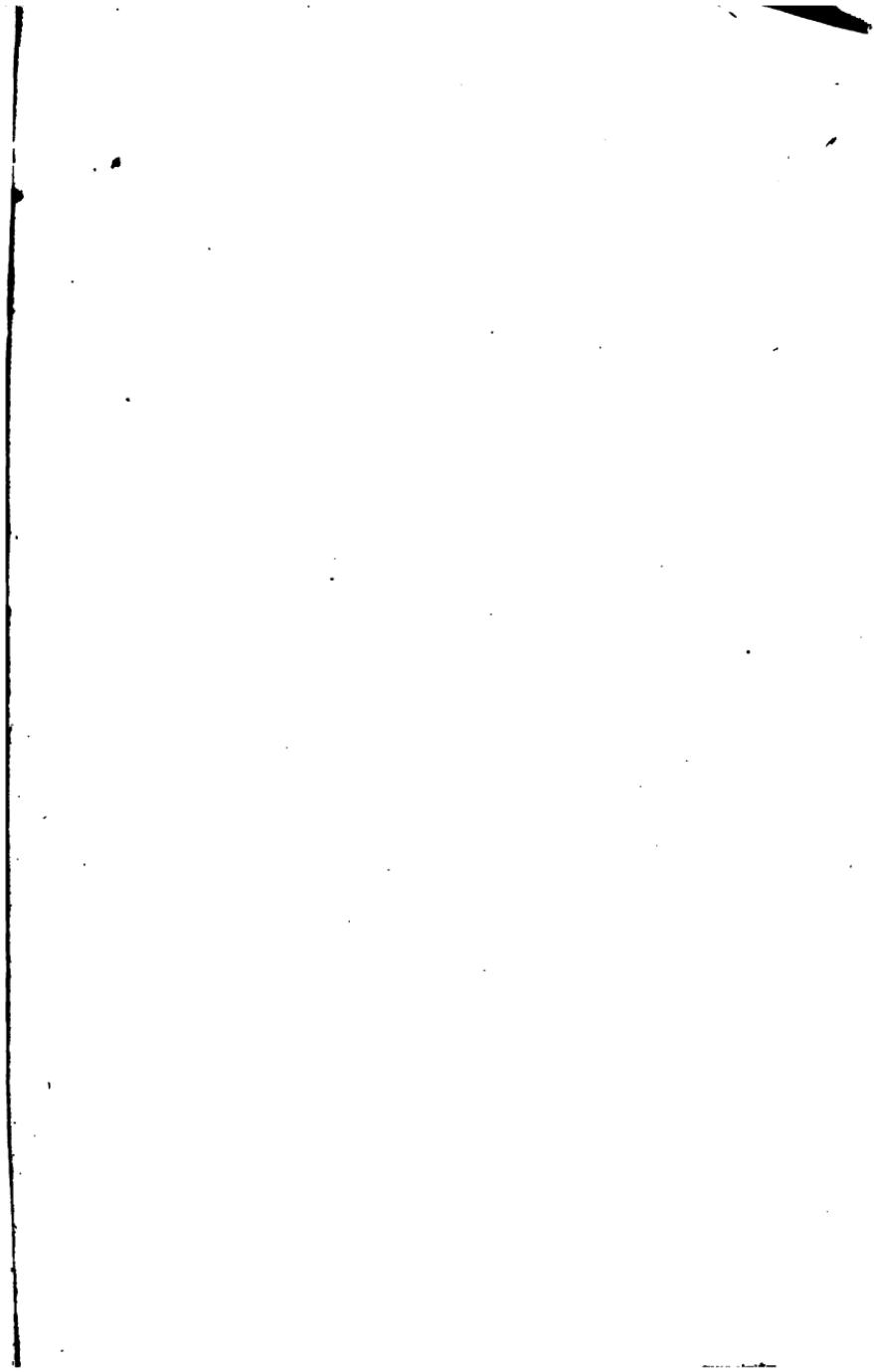
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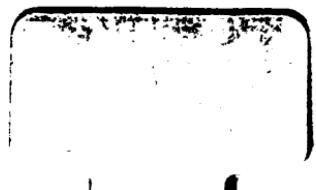


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THE
LIFE OF A LOVER.
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

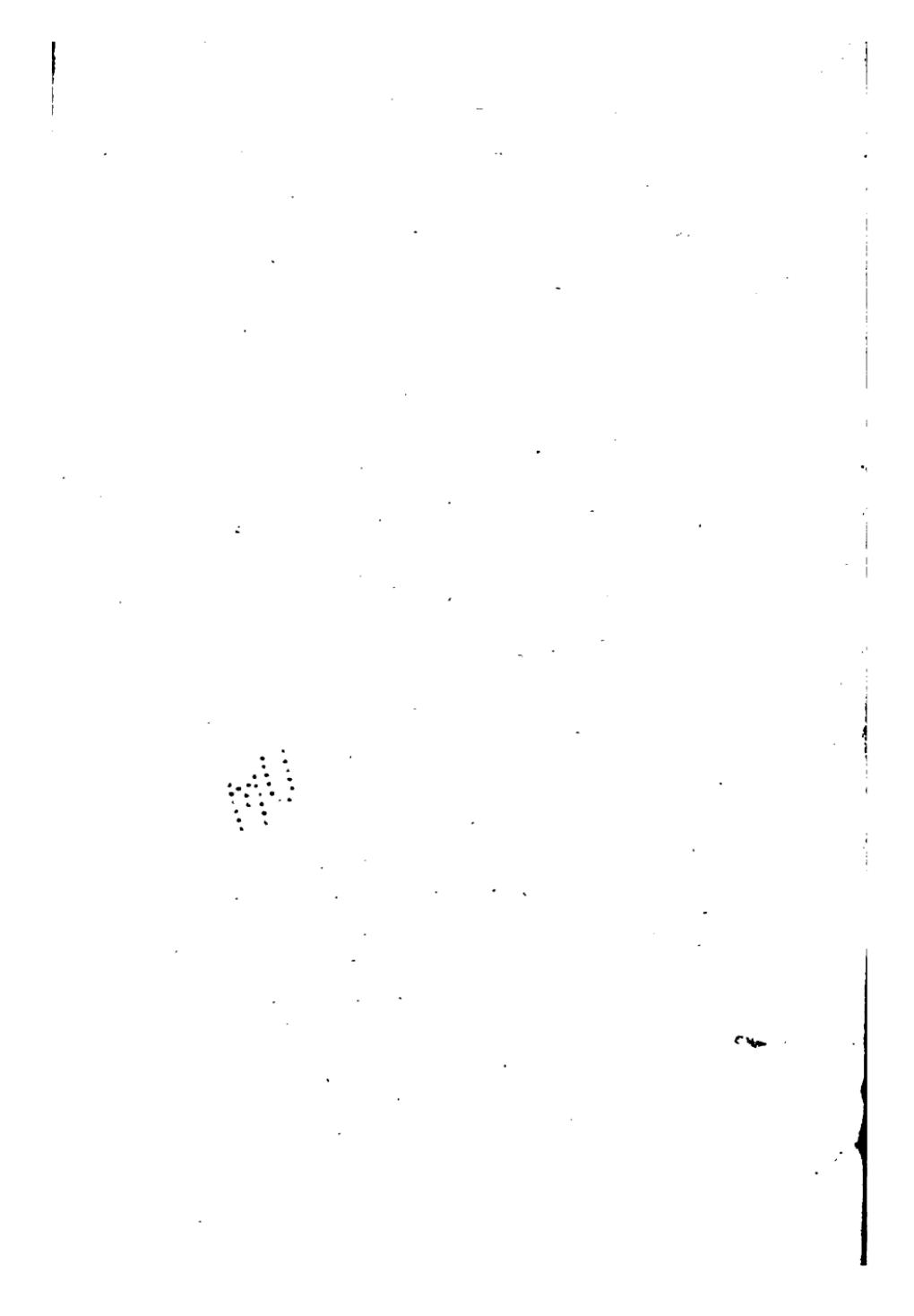
BY SOPHIA LEE.

Honour, that spark of the celestial fire
Which above nature makes mankind aspire,
Ennobles the rude passions of our frame.
* * * * * * * * *
The richest treasure of a gen'rous breast,
Which gives the stamp and standard to the rest.
MARQ. OF HALIFAX.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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THE
LIFE
OF A
LOVER.

LETTER CXLIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

St. Edmund's Vale.

RECALLED once more, by the prevailing voice of love, from sorrow, death, and a despair which would have made even death a relief, after I have rendered my first thanks to him who averted a fate so horrid, let me dedicate my next to that tender friend who made my welfare so entirely her own. Your kind congratulations, my Amelia, contributed to overwhelm me with kindness; and

fain would I awaken in your bosom sensations as tender as those which you so well know how to revive in mine. My frame is yet debilitated; and had not Lord Westbury saved me from the tedious and painful recapitulation of events which I shudder but to recollect, you must yet have wanted a clue to the fearful labyrinth, where I had almost lost myself. You already are apprised of the cause of my affliction, but to imagine its excess is hardly possible even to you. Lord Westbury himself cannot guess what I suffered ; for even the most affectionate of men wants much of the tenderness of a woman. In that sex, love is opposed by passions strong enough to form an equipoise ; and they enjoy all the advantages of a *republic* in the heart, while we languish under an *absolute monarchy*. Yet this difference would clearly convince me, that women enjoy most happiness, when happy at all. Love, the perfection of humanity, ought perhaps to comprise every passion

and sentiment, without distinguishing any.

My nature was yet fraught with this exquisite tenderness :—unsuspicious—fearless—conviction came before doubt had entered into my bosom. I am now astonished how I resisted the terrible impression !—so agonising were my emotions at the moment when I opened the curtains of the bed, that every sense seemed resolved into sight. Lady Killarney too !—to be insulted, deserted, heart-struck, for her—a woman whom he had so often ridiculed and despised !—It left him without a single extenuation for his sin, and me without the least hope of recovering him from utter depravity. Yet even at the moment when a kind of meritorious hatred seemed ingrafting itself on my heart, it often swelled into softness, and dissolved almost in tears—When he afterwards soothed and caressed me, I wonder that I did not expire with horror at his supposed hypocrisy. At some intervals contempt

extinguished jealousy, and at others jealousy contempt.—Why, argued my pride, should I make him the object of my cares, whom it is no longer possible to save from perdition? or why, through the weak wish of dividing an affection which I have already lost, involve myself in temporal as well as eternal calamity? No, let Lord Westbury *feel*, since he will not *see*, the difference between virtue and vice; the one superior to all sensuality, the other beneath every thing but that: and this may be done without anger or reproach, if I maintain a silence sufficiently emphatic.—Indeed what purpose could the contrary conduct have answered, when consciousness must at once forerun resentment, and likewise make it unpardonable? It was not a mere surmise, a suspicion, I was to speak upon, but an absolute, a humiliating certainty; which but to mention might break down the only barrier subsisting—decorum, and excuse Lord Westbury to himself for adding hatred

to injury.—No, never, cried I, shall he presume to level me with her whom he ventures to prefer : I cannot, alas ! prevent his being the only, the everlasting, wish of my heart ; but in that weak heart be henceforth its weaker wish buried. I should perhaps find him but the more enamoured of vice from any mean compliance on the part of virtue.—Yet from whom am I now to learn to guard my thoughts, my wishes, myself?—Just Heaven ! from my husband, my beloved, the only being on earth to whom my whole nature assimilates !

Such were my miserable reveries during the nights and days which I passed without Lord Westbury. Judge then how these acute feelings were irritated, when at length he ventured to expostulate with me on the coldness and obstinacy of my conduct : grief and indignation almost betrayed me. I surveyed him in silent astonishment : it was the first time it ever had occurred to me, that he could owe a grace to my fond

partiality. Yet I sought in vain for half of those which I had hitherto found in him.

When that terrible letter (at the mildness of which, now I know his imaginary provocations, I can never sufficiently wonder) was delivered to me, I found in the refined finesse by which I thought it dictated, motives for a new kind of suffering. Yet had I no hope, no consolation, but in God, and my own conscience : and I made up my mind rather to die than to forfeit those. I tried to silence at once the woman and the wife, that in my answer I might one day affect him to the noblest purpose ; nor was I without the proud determination, that he should lament and admire her whom he could not love. My constitution, however, bore no proportion to my fortitude ; I endured all the tortures of a mother, without hoping the indulgence of being one, and this final disappointment might well bring the days al-

most to a period which I wished not to prolong.

Alas! how ill should I have been prepared for the fate which I thus ventured to brave!—Revenge and despair alone had inspired this savage kind of courage; and I was cruel enough to number among my future consolations, the tears of a faithful heart, which would become conscious too late of injustice. Patience, piety, hope, and resignation, the only true preparatives for death, were far from my thoughts.—God was too merciful thus to recall me: he deigned to pardon my involuntary error, and taught me repentance for so culpably indulging my passions; rewarding this conquest over myself with the blessed conviction of Lord Westbury's innocence, and even increased tenderness. That letter of mine which he allows me to transmit to you, where you will see that self stood subdued by a dearer self, has so engrafted me in his soul, that it must lose every sense before I am forgotten. He almost

deifies the fortitude which, by a kind of paradox, sprang from excess of weakness.

You have learnt most probably, as we lately did, by the papers, the tremendous catastrophe of the abandoned Lady Killarney; whom Heaven took warm, as it were, in unrepented sin. From the inn where she left Lord Westbury, she posted to Park-gate: and having there hired a vessel to herself, she urged its departure; fearful, as it should seem, of pursuit. Money, which can buy all things but virtue, happiness, and safety, prevailed upon the captain to sail, though the weather was unpromising. Here ends our information: three days afterwards the wreck was found upon the coast of Ireland, and crowds are impatiently seeking the body of the wretched woman whom not a single being laments. Greatly as I have suffered through her means, I cannot relate her death without horror, or speak of it without tears. Gracious Heaven! what must her feel-

ings have been, when, after driving without hope at the mercy of the wind, she heard the tremendous watery abyss from its deepest hollows, roaring for its prey ; and saw, while she was yet in the very fulness of health and pride of triumph, but one moment between her and eternity ! Youth, beauty, fortune, arose to her appalled soul but as condemnations at the tribunal before which she was thus called : and even your poor Cecilia, on the bed of sickness, whither her malice had laid me, was not perhaps forgotten. —No hope remained for this voluntary wretch, either here or hereafter :—a dreary chaos must have preceded in her soul a momentary extinction !—a final audit !—She sunk in the vast of waters ! —May her suffering be received as an expiation !

Lord Westbury has just told me, that by the paper of to-day, he finds her body to have been cast ashore, and interred in the same grave with the mariners. Her title dies with herself ; and

her large estates will become the support of a numerous tribe of humble relations, whom the haughty peeress scorned to own. May they make a better use of her wealth ! hardly is it possible that they should make a worse : she has my forgiveness, but humanity reaches no further. With what horror do we read of those savages who deliberately lash a fellow-creature to a tree, and enjoy the agonies which they at once occasion and prolong ! Can we read with less horror of the cruelties which christians sometimes are guilty of ? How often do the base and malicious, in wanton security, undermine your happiness, and laugh to see you vainly struggling under the ruins ! The savage only plunges his darts into your body, but the civilised monster into your soul : and where can be the comparison, in point of guilt, between torturing you for an hour, or for a life ?

I cannot consider the faults and the fate of this unhappy woman, without re-

curing to my old point, her erroneous education. Born to luxury, bred among flatterers, Lady Killarney thought that a coach shut out slander, that happiness was the business of life, and gallantry the whole of happiness. How woefully has she been undeceived ! A thousand times have I seen this very woman, who never denied herself a single indulgence, bursting with rage, or expiring with ennui. Flying to gaming, for which she had no real taste, merely to pass the tedious hours ; then risquing in a bet sums which were large enough to have made whole families happy, and which thus employed would have brought to her own bosom that peace time ever hallows into pleasure. In religion she had no support : for as she had only mechanically gone through its common duties, of course the first *wise fool* who ventured to talk to her on the subject, perplexed her with a question ; and having overturned that mode of faith which she owed only to habit, she ever after wanted

steadiness to consider or piety to fix her principles. My Lord yesterday gave into my hand those billets which my own delicacy alone made new to me; for they were all within an open casket in a book-case, to which I had a key when I lived in his house. Good Heavens! with what levity does she speak of their illicit attachment, and even rally him on wishing to conceal it! With what address does she pervert good precepts to assist her argument, and select bad ones when sanctioned by a great name! That beautiful poem where the fire and fancy of Pope so totally obscured his judgment and sense of morality, has, I fear, already done more mischief in society than all his other writings will ever do good. Every frothy coxcomb, though he could not perhaps find words of his own to convey his licentious wishes, knows how to comprehend them in the divine language of the poet; and many a romantic Miss, with equal emphasis, replies, "Not Cæsar's Empress!" Such a reverence

have I for Pope and Addison, as implicitly to believe, that had the latter thought he should supply the weak with courage to brave the Almighty when he so nobly painted the deliberate suicide of Cato, or the former how many young hearts he should infect with the perfumed poison of his loose Eloisa's enthusiasm, each would have made an oblation to virtue of the poem in question; though, had it been the only one of the author, his immortality would have been ensured. This is having a high idea of the greatness of their minds, when the motive of vanity in each would hardly allow any thing to be called so.

I have written this long letter at different periods: but it is ever indulgence to write to you; and my father, you know, used always to say that I must have been born with a pen in my hand.

Sir James Monro and Lady Sarah, with the Cliffords, are to be with us next week. My illness keeps them away

till then; for our present residence is not commodious for a large company. Lady Sarah kindly condoles with me on what she calls *her* misfortune, as well as *mine*; but says that she will never forgive me if I serve her so next time. Ah! were I to blame, I should never pardon myself; yet I had rather she thought me in fault, than that she knew the painful truth.

Lady Harington, though very unfit to bear fatigue, has nursed me with an assiduity which I shall never forget; and is now obliged to hasten home, to prepare for her own hour of trial. May she obtain whatever she wishes, at the smallest price which a woman can pay! I dare not go with her; for I tremble but to think of what she must necessarily suffer. I wished for Marianne's company here; but Sophia says that I cannot in mere gratitude think of keeping her just now: nor does my sister really desire to remain with me; though she vehemently protests it would be her choice. She is

often rallied on loving Percival, and bears it with the gravity of my Lord Chief Justice ; but I take notice that she is not to be rallied from going when he goes, and coming when he comes. She always finds herself suddenly seized on these occasions with a fit of tenderness for *dear Lady Harington !* who smiles, humours, and carries her off. My Lord dies for a plot to expose her prudery ; and but for me, poor Percival would have broken his neck on horseback, or fallen out of the boat and been drowned.—In short, the worthy soul would not have had a whole bone in his body, by way of *extorting* some proof of her sensibility ; for not one word of soft acknowledgement can be won from her by any other means. Yet am I much mistaken if the man most interested in the discovery has not already made it ; for I perceive sometimes in Percival's conduct towards my sister a polite coldness, and minute attention, not unlike her own. I would fain learn where he is vulnerable : and wish that it

were, like Achilles, in the *heel*; for Marianne dances charmingly: and, after all, I cannot but wish her to obtain a man of so much merit. The office, however, of observing the progress of sensibility in his heart suits not the woman whom he once loved; nor would the incorrigible prude thank me perhaps for my pains.

Adieu! this letter has been a week's work, though you may find it only an hour's amusement.

LETTER CXLIV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

St. Edmund's Vale.

HOW can you, my Amelia, have the inhumanity to descend upon your pleasures during harvest, when you know what a passion I have for them, and that they are no longer in my power! Even if I could persuade my Lord to adopt so rustic a taste, our very presence would destroy the delight of those who earn the enjoyment.—The song, the

laugh, the jest, in short all the unrestrained festivity of our inferiors, is at once annihilated at our approach. Blushes, silence, awkward scrapes, and still more awkward curtsies, too plainly speak out self-excluding superiority; and I think myself fortunate when, through a hedge, I can witness the innocent amusements of those who labour. Paris does not supply a vehicle, nor Arabia a set of horses, that could now give me as exquisite a delight as I used to feel when riding home on the last hay-cart, half buried in flowers, and carolling like the birds around me; while the joyous crowd, with their forks and rakes thrown over their shoulders, joined in chorus, and followed with no less satisfaction; sure to receive through my little hands, in my father's bounty, such parting gifts as were proportioned to their diligence..

The year already retreats, and though no winter can promise better, I must bewail expiring autumn.—Yet, were we at

Arlington, I should not complain of the coming season ; for I often think that those people know little of mental indulgence who call a winter in the country dreary. It is then that man may become justly conscious of his own importance in creation. All nature works for him in summer, and he has only, in common with every other creature, to enjoy the ripening abundance. Winter calls upon him to dispense what his foresight has saved, and renders him to the mighty mass of inferior beings a kind of subordinate providence. The wind which curls a flood of leaves round our feet, sobs to the thinking soul the sufferings of mortality : and, oh ! how sweet a warmth may glow in the heart which knows not another that is cold through its neglect ! If the weather is sharper in the country, the fire is likewise brighter, and diffuses a cheerfulness over the groups which it assembles, peculiar to the place and season. Almost every person who is merely willing to entertain, possesses, in such a place

and season, the power ; and what persons, justly alive to the pleasures of benevolence and domestic happiness, can envy the crowds who are sitting formally arranged at either theatre, where they must blush, perhaps, at the wit of the last age, or yawn at that of the present ? Or if yet more elegantly classed at the assembly of some empty-headed woman of ton, the gay groups lose very often, for the mere pride of being of her parties, sums which might on earth make them acquainted with merit, and in a better world with God. Yet, do not imagine that I condemn indiscriminately the pleasures of the great world. Thousands enjoy them with innocence ; a few with moderation. I would only observe, that pleasure need not *always* be sought where it is so seldom found ; and that, sometimes to one vanity, and sometimes to another, we often unconsciously sacrifice the duties and the delights of humanity. The heart, born a kind of blank, is actuated through life by a variety of principles and habits,

which may as easily be of one kind as the other ; nor would a Bath Dowager have more exquisite satisfaction in sweeping a faro table, than I feel in feeding a little robin, who resorts to my window every morning, in the certainty that I shall neither forget him nor his hungry family. When human-nature presents such a variety of objects on which we may exercise our benevolence, no situation can be so low as to deprive us of the gratification, nor any so high as to justify the neglect. I conceive creation to have sprung from the sacred principle of benevolence ; and if so, it must be meant for the meditation, the business, the delight of our lives. Every noble power naturally contracts in the heart when that has lost its influence, which it insensibly will do without continual exertion. This attack on the great world you will, perhaps, think unwarranted at a juncture when charity seems so general and boundless ; but that appears to me, I am sorry to observe, a mode which many,

people have discovered of qualifying with their own consciences for the want of active benevolence ; and is often rather an ostentatious declaration of affluence and superiority, than the humble offerings of genuine philanthropy.—Thousands are ready to relieve a sufferer, who would not wound that self-love which they term sensibility by listening to the tale of his afflictions : but the person who merely conveys the gift of another; and does that, is more truly charitable than the giver of the money. Alas ! true benevolence is a simplifying principle, which, insisting on the original equality of human nature, bids us chaste and correct the wantonness of happiness and wealth, by levelling ourselves for the time with the wretch whom God has given us the blessed power to succour. Thus may we, perhaps, by a kind of reflected voluntary pain, deserve our own enjoyments. Money is often the least relief which may be administered to necessity ; for sympathy to exalted minds

(and many of those are born to be poor) is the most touching generosity. When, therefore, I see to public calamities or public institutions, distinguished benefactions with names as distinguished, I sigh for the poverty of mind in those persons who buy newspaper reputation at so high a price; and should no more conclude a person benevolent from gifts of this nature, than loyal from going finely dressed to court on a birth-day. But whenever a munificent donation is mentioned with an humble initial, I pause upon the simple mark of honourable liberality with fond admiration, and long to know the humane heart which thus makes a silent offering to his nature, and his God.

You will soon discern by what means this subject took possession of my mind, which always first treats of that which it most feels.

My dear indulgent love exhausted himself in studying to amuse me, as soon as I was permitted to go abroad. Know-

ing that I was fond of the water, he procured a commodious boat, that I might be rowed on the lake; and hid horns and clarionets in the woods, where they reached us, “soft as the nightingale’s song.” The marquee was pitched every day on some new spot: sometimes in the retired dell which I once described as near the hermit’s cell, where the old oaks hang from the rocky hills, and

Spread their umbrage,
Broad and brown as evening;

while the rushing waters glittered through the boughs, and gave (as I most absurdly said) a *cool sound*. On other days he chose a more distant knoll, with velvet verdure; whence we saw far around us a varying landscape, rich in the mellow hues of autumn. You will not wonder that my pastoral fit came on. Not a nymph in a straw hat could I espy, but I exclaimed,

How happy is the harmless country maid,
Who, rich by nature, scorns superfluous aid;

Whose modest clothes no wanton eyes invite,
 But, like her soul, long keep their native white;
 Who, free from storms that on the great ones fall,
 Makes but few wishes, and enjoys them all.

Alas, poor girls! we must not trust to the poet's account of them. They make but few wishes, and obtain hardly any. The dread of poverty, I should fear, prevents more happy marriages than ever are made by the possessors of wealth. I have of late got into some village secrets, and know many a rosy cheek which hides an aching heart.—You shall judge.

I was sitting one day on a rustic seat in the above-mentioned dell, intent upon a book, when a pretty neat girl, with a basket in her hand, passing by, dropt me a curtsey. I had just found myself in want of refreshment, and my Lord was looking for some labourer to send to the house. I inquired of the little lass, what she had in her basket.—“Quince marmalade,” she answered. But, on my attempting to open the

basket, she took out some biscuits, and apologising for their homeliness, ver civilly offered them to me. I bade her sit down, and was once more trying to open a small jar of the marmalade, when she hastily stopt me, with a blush, saying, "that the biscuits were her own, and at my service; but the marmalade mother had made on purpose for my Lady Countess, who was sick at the great old house hard by, and she would be nangered if she did not deliver it as she bid her." I could not help smiling to find that it was for myself I was restricted; but these good souls know not a chintz gown from a tawdry cotton, and never dream that a close morning cap and green bonnet can cover any head of a higher rank than that of an abigail. I resolved to keep my own secret, and only assured her that my lady at the old house *hard by* was as good-natured as myself, and would be mighty well pleased that I should taste her marmalade.—I found it very good; and as I

feasted, I continued talking to the girl. She was still very anxious to see my Lady; for she told me "that she had been at Naunts, a matter of twenty miles off, ever since these fine quality comded into the country, but she had axd mother to send she this morning that she might see them; for all the parish counted them the happiest pair in that, or the next to it, except William and Betty Maydew, hard by the turnpike."— Ah! thought I, and is there a pair then to whom even we must resign the palm? — "Besides, Madam, folks tell us that the Countess do talk to poor bodies, for all the world as kindly as the parson's wife. Every soul, far and near, prayed she might get over her illness, for my Lord was like to break his very heart; and we do all love him, he is such a generous landlord; and besides, he will settle, they say, in this country, and that will be the making of all we poor folk."— " You have a kindness, child," said I, "for Lord Westbury, and for matrimony

too, I perceive ;—are you married ?”
 —“ No,” with a heavy sigh.—“ But you have a sweetheart ?”—“ No,” with a heavier sigh than before, and a shake of the head.—“ No, my dear, why so ?”—“ Because I must not have he I do like, and I won’t have no other body.”—“ But why may not you have he you like ?”—“ Because—because—it breaks my very heart to think of it. Yet I ought not to be ashamed: Thomas is as honest a lad as ever broke bread, but for all that I may never more set eyes on him.” She turned away, and wept immoderately.

The girl pleased and interested me :—not by beauty, for of that she had no share ; but by a certain artlessness of soul—a modest ingenuousness, which made her give up her secret to a stranger, rather than keep it by deviating from rectitude. This very candour would have made me cease to urge her, but that I thought I could best learn how she might obtain her wish while I

was unknown, and then perhaps be able to render her happy in my own person.

I should have told you, that she had placed the basket at her feet, and in her agitation overturned all her mother's marmalade, without noticing it. I now addressed her again :—" What is your name, my dear ?"—“ Polly Brown.”—“ Then, my good Polly, open all your heart to me, and I will give you some prudent advice, which perhaps in the end may serve you too.”—“ Oh, madam ! do n't serve me, pray, I do n't mind being poor ;—serve Thomas—he is going into a strange country, without money or friends.”—“ But who, my dear, is Thomas ?”—“ Lord !” cried she, dropping the apron from her eyes to fix them full of astonishment on me, “ sure you do know our Thomas ?—all the country rings of him.”—“ Indeed, my dear, he is not so well known as you fancy : but what do they say of him ?—tell me your little story.”—“ Why you must know,

madam, feyther died while we were all *smaal* childre ; and mother had been a lady's maid, and lived among the quality, so she took to making jellies, and marmalade, and selling fruit, and oranges, and sich like ; there's not a family, far or near, but what do deal with her. Thomas's feyther lived a stone'a throw off we, and I larned to write at charity school with him ; and dearly I loved Thomas, and he me : but before we growd up to any size, Thomas's feyther turned out a sad old man, and made away at the ale-house with all he could lay his hands on. However master got Mr. Figgins, Squire Hardy's steward, to take Thomas, to help him in his accounts, and sich like, for he ware a fine penman. There it did my heart good to see our Thomas cut sich a figure, and to hear all the servants give him such a good *character*. So all went on well for a matter of two years ; and Thomas used to come to and fro at our house, suitoring to me, and mothen said I should have him when he did rise.

a little in the world : but, Lord ! that was never likely to happen, for his feyther used to niggle him out of all his savings. At last Thomas ware preferd to receive the squire's rents, and used to come to church dressed in a nice green coat, with a posy, looking like any lord : when, would any mortal think it ! as he was going home one evening with fifty pounds rent, which he had just received for the squire, who should waylay him but his own wicked feyther, who made no bones of robbing him of all that sum of money ;—for well he knowed they might hang Thomas before he would hang him. Well, poor Thomas was in a fine quan-dary, and offered the old rogue the coat off his back, and the buckles out of his shoes ; nay his watch, and all, if so be as he would but leave the money alone. No, he came for the money, he said, and the money he would have, though he took all the other things too, and beat his poor son so, that he could hardly crawl to the squire's. When the steward

saw him in this pickle, and found that he had been robbed, he axed him by who, that he might raise the hue and cry. What could poor Thomas do? he was sadly put to it! so they all said as he quivocated; for he could *not* say he did not know the robber without colouring. The squire was in a furious taking, and they soon laid hold of the old man; for he had been fool enough to put his son's coat on. Every *body* knowed he had done it, but Thomas would *not* swear away the life of his own father. Squire vowed he would hang them both for colloguing, and sent Thomas to jail too; where he was kept ever so long, but at last it was found as how they could not punish he, and so they let him out. But, dear heart! how strange every body looked upon the poor lad! no one would employ him, lest he should have joined with his father to cheat his master; though his back and shoulders were not healed of the bruises then: nor had he a shilling, or a shillingsworth, in the varsal

world : he was ready to break his heart, and I mine. At last, poor lad ! he settled it with me, that he should set out on foot for Hull, to work his passage up to London ; where we do both hope as how *this sad story won't be known.*" (Could one avoid smiling in one's tears at this stroke of exquisite simplicity ?) " I gave him all the money I had when he took leave of me ; and I am afraid as of my life that mother will miss the silver pepper-box grammar left me in her will, and then they will say may-be he stole that too : for an ill name is enow in this country." Her sobs redoubled, and I tried to cheer her by assuring her that my lady would speak to her mother, and get Thomas a place. At this juncture she suddenly cast her eyes upon the shining fragments of the jars of maraschado ; and had you seen her grief and exclamations, you would have thought this as great a misfortune as the other : " for mother," she said, " was very severe, and had set her heart on having madam

at the vale for a customer." I was still not willing to avow myself, lest she should build hopes upon my interest that I might not realize, nor knew I now how to console her. At last I bid her tell her mother, that Lord Westbury's house-keeper had promised to present the mar-malade to her Lady, and if it pleased her would send for more. I then insisted on paying for this, and offered a guinea. The girl started back astonished, and said, " If mother saw that she had more than a crown, she might fancy *she* had robbed on the highway too." With this doughty sum, after a thousand curt-sies and thanks, the poor girl tripped off;—and in good time, for a few minutes afterwards my lord arrived with a train of servants, the marquée, and a cold dinner: nor could I longer have deceived Polly Brown.

Lord Westbury is always much amused with hearing me imitate the rustic dialect, and during our little repast I told him my poor Polly's story in her

own words ; inviting him, after we had sat awhile, to set forward in search of the happy pair, to whom we yielded in village fame. He in vain assured me, that I should be dying with fatigue, and as brown as the stubble through which I must walk. It was my pleasure to go, and with his usual indulgence he at length allowed me my own way : truth must be owned, though I said not a word of weariness, I leant so unmercifully on his arm, that I fancy he guessed I felt all my own folly and obstinacy. At length, however, we reached the turnpike, and a little beyond perceived a white cot, overhung with a vine which might grace Italy. By the turnpike-gate stood a waggon, but not a creature could we see, either in the house, or out of it. On we marched, arm in arm, to the white cot ; and, as we entered, perceived a whole group of people, gathered round the chair of a young woman, so wholly intent upon her, that not an eye turned towards us. We drew yet nearer,

to discover the cause of the variety of sighs, groans, and kind lamentations. Alas ! we too soon comprehended the recent calamity : the only son of this young happy couple had just been killed by the waggon, and the mother, yet clasping the mangled remains, sunk under the severe agony. I turned pale as death, and shrunk back on the shoulder of my Lord, who seated me as far from the group as the confined spot allowed.—“ God he knows, my mistress,” said the poor waggoner with a sorrowful simple countenance, “ I would no more have hurt a hair of your child’s head than if he had been my own ; but I tell you he came behind me, and run under the wheel—how could I help that ? Aw aware to die so, surely ; and God’s will must be done.”—“ Do n’t talk to me ! ” cried the wretched young creature, “ do n’t *any* of you talk to me ! let me have my own way ; sure I may cry over my murdered baby ! ” Then lifting her apron, in which the child was wrapt,

" My pretty Billy, did I think when thy little arms were thrown round my neck just now, as I drest thee, that they never would be so again ? Did I think that thy sweet face would ever be so *disfigured* that thy own mammy would not know it?"—" Betty, my love," cried the afflicted husband, turning with his arm her head from the dreadful object, but only to bury it in his bosom, " do n't thee grieve so : I am sure I would have died to save my little one ; but since he is in Heaven, we must bear God's will with patience."—" Why will *you* say a word, William? Ah ! what was your love to mine ? I bore him—I brought him with pain and sorrow into the world—reared him at my breast—he was all my comfort through the long long day ; and how joyfully would he run and tell me, as well as he was able, when he saw you coming from work ! And to lose him as it were in a moment ! to have him playing at my feet, and in a thought, as it were, hold him dead in my arms !—What

are you here yet?" added she, turning in rage toward the waggoner (who stood rather overwhelmed by her reproaches, than any consciousness of deserving them—an awkward kind of distress, which is often produced by the ungoverned feelings of the vulgar): "how can you look on the baby you have murdered?"—"Have patience, my dearest," again cried the husband.—"I tell you, William, you did not bear him."—"But you did," cried the interesting tender father, with a gush of tears, which made my very heart dissolve within me. The waggoner now hastily retired, protesting that he had rather his waggon had taken fire, though it was his all, than that this should have happened. Poor fellow! the misfortune, I am told, would have been as great to him by a forfeiture, had he not met with the merciful lord of the manor. The increasing grief of the mother still more afflicted the husband, who spoke to her in a low endearing tone for a little

time ; then asked, what more she could have said had he been thus snatched from her : she started, and losing the sense of the real calamity in the mere idea of a greater, the very soul of love shot from her eyes, when throwing her arm round William's neck, she faintly repeated, " Oh, William ! I should then have said *nought*."—" Let us steal away, my Lord," cried I, rising softly, " nor intrude upon a grief which time will soon meliorate into sweetness. This pair may indeed set the world at defiance, for they possess all it can give, as we do, in each other : and yet I cannot yield in affection even to her, since, as she simply but strongly expresses herself, under such a calamity I too should have said *nought*."

My Lord prest my hand with a confiding fondness, and we were silently retreating, when some of the rustics turned abruptly, and discovered us. My Lord and my Lady at once caused a revolution in all their feelings and faces ; and

each hand, as by intuition, snatched off the hat with clumsy respect.—Even the miserable parents, by an effort of humility, tried to dry their eyes, and stand up in our presence. I would have spoken, but not a sound could I utter.. Lord Westbury, however, recommended to both of them resignation to an inevitable misfortune ; and saying that he should order the unfortunate babe to be interred at his expence, and join with me in attending the christening of the next (for the poor woman was happily ready to bring another into the world), took his leave; while tears, prayers, and blessings, followed us both.

At the cottage door we found the phaeton, which the tender caution of my love had ordered for my relief. Attuned to softness and melancholy, we drove tête-à-tête to the Prospect-house, and drank tea by ourselves.

Scenes like these give us not the idea of rural felicity which romances inspire ; yet am I afraid that I might in a very

few peregrinations add to the number. Happiness, or I should rather say content, is in the power of every rank below royal; and those evils which poison it descend in regular gradation from the throne to the cottage. The country wench whose coarse arts entrap into wedlock the raw squire, or unvenerable dotard, is at heart as ambitious as Anne Bullen; opportunity is the only difference between them; and that is so great an advantage, as to give to very common abilities uncommon distinction.

Adieu!

LETTER CXLV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

St. Edmund's Vale,

I THINK it is among the sprightly sayings of Madame de Sevigné, that bad company is to be preferred to good,

from the pleasure we feel when they take leave of us. If so, I am in fortune's favour, for I have *not* you, and have just seen my Lord's relations drive off. My heart seems a hundred weight the lighter since the morning. A visitation in the country from ceremonious people, is of all plagues the most intolerable. They impose a tax upon every moment of one's life ; and you know I have not been accustomed to prefer my own ease and comfort to that of my company. This house too, though large, is totally out of repair, save a very few apartments, and they are incommodious. Nor have we here any neighbourhood : and when our pleasures must necessarily be wholly domestic, we ought to love those very dearly with whom we resolve daily to share them.

Every one has a shining time : I now perceive Lady Sarah's loquacious insipidity to be enchanting, compared with the precise decorums of Sir James, who makes reaching your fan a matter of im-

portance ; and never takes a turn in the garden, without two or three visits to the barometer. Nor was the coarse coquetry and intolerable affectation of Mrs. Clifford less tiresome. Of her, indeed, the whole party have been quite sick from the first day ; and I alone had the complaisance to conceal my weariness. With Lady Sarah, the cold prudence which results from pride, is the most valuable of qualities : you may of course calculate how very small a share of her regard Mrs. Clifford can engross. With Sir James, a grave ironical kind of wit, and a stiff politeness, alone can succeed : of his favour she has therefore no larger portion : and even my Lord's good-nature, which, till now, I ever thought inexhaustible, she has thrown herself so much upon, that he too flies her ; though she still calls him her *favourite* ;—a mere term with her for the person whom she oppresses with a double load of her whimsies. Of her spouse we have the least cause to complain, for I

am yet to him a Gorgon, and turn him into stone. He of course flies from me whenever he can find a pretext for it. He has of late avowed a love of field sports, as an excuse for almost living with Sir George Harington. *Hunt*, it is true, he does, though neither hare nor deer, but my Marianne it seems. Lady H. writes word that he is my sister's absolute shadow, and more devoted, if possible, to her, than his brother is to me. Marianne is not worldly enough to take this in the common course of things; but hates, dreads, and flies him: and when she can no longer avoid his company, treats him with such glances as would have petrified an old-fashioned lover:—those of these days can survive any thing but kindness. Is not this a judgement on him for his inhumanity towards me? “Sigh on,” say I to him; and to Marianne, “Revenge, my dear, your sister’s cause:” nor do I doubt her, since it is a mere constitutional vengeance which I demand.

Percival remains at Orange Hill, and sometimes runs his curricles over to dine with us: whether to trace any part of my former conduct, or more effectually to tease Marianne, his brother officer has struck up a sudden and violent intimacy with him. I do not like this, nor yet would I choose to interfere. Mr. Clifford never acts without some secret view; and his friendship, like his love, is always, I doubt, destructive to the object. May the amiable Percival never be misled, by the integrity of his own nature, into trusting too far to the supposed similitude! I think Lady Harington shall warn him.

The only rational amusement which we have had here is drawing. Sir James brought an architect of eminence with him, as my Lord means to have this seat rebuilt directly in the Gothic taste, but with the modern improvements which comprehend comfort. Many were the debates concerning situation; and not a few discoveries have been made of the

advantages of that on which the old house stands. All which art has rendered Arlington, this seat is by nature, with the retired wildness I adore. The whole estate abounds with rocks, caves, timber, and water: The lake in the park near you my Lord tells me is only a basin, compared with the natural one here. Lady Sarah, who was born in this old mansion, is so charmed with this building project, that she has already given us a handsome present to lay the foundation of the new one; and promises another when that will allow us again to receive her. Poor Mrs. Clifford half kills herself with gaping, whenever these discussions are on the carpet; nor is able to comprehend what possible charm we can find in hollow elms, ivied oaks, and craggy ridges. Indeed she ventured to hint what an improvement it would be to cut down our magnificent double vista of trees in front, and thus open a prospect of the high road:—where the only amusement we could possibly find would be to

count the broad-wheeled waggons, and trotting butter-women! What a pity that I had not you to wink at! as the lively Sevigné pleasantly says.

I have been most agreeably interrupted by the arrival of your letter, my Amelia! Yes, you *shall* have the conclusion of my village romances. Poor Thomas we soon found was yet waiting to sail in a small vessel from Hull. On his being brought hither, my Lord resolved to prove his principles, by offering him a handsome sum, and the girl of his choice, if he would ascertain his father's crime. "To be sure," he replied, "father was *too* bad; but, please your Lordship's honour, I had rather beg my bread all the days of my life, than bring down his grey hairs in shame and sorrow to the grave." After this, you may easily guess that Thomas was put in possession of a good place, and his faithful Polly; who, poor girl, will remember with joy to the last day of her life the lucky pot of marmalade. Of what infinite consequence to

the poor is the countenance of the great ! No one dares speak ill of a young man whom Lord Westbury patronises : and those who would not have known the unfortunate Thomas a week since, now contend for the honour of his friendship. The vulgar are surely very discerning ; for they know how to give a charm to flattery, which is not as generally discovered at courts :—they always treat me with my Lord's panegyric, and him with mine ; and thus effectually interest and please both of us. Of our unfortunate pair I cannot yet give you a satisfactory account : though the sense of their loss abates, it yet hangs heavy on both. I hope to go to church with the next child myself ; and would rather prolong my stay here a little, than mortify the poor mother to whom I promised it. These petty honours are serious things to such people : and did she know how seriously I consider the duties which I take upon myself with the title of godmother, she would value the offer still more.

Lady Sarah communicated to me an extraordinary report, by sifting me as to its truth. Did you ever hear that the formal separation of the Duke and Duchess of Fernham happened at York, and was caused by my Lord?—I am fix'd never more to remind him of that odious place, or he would satisfy me in a moment. It is certain that the Duchess is under the protection of her father and mother, from whom neither prayers nor threats can recover her. The Duke is half distracted at her inflexibility; nor would it, perhaps, be sanctioned by Lord and Lady Winchester, but that she is pregnant, and they dread to lose the child, did they give their daughter any new uneasiness. Lady Sarah is of opinion that the breach will never be healed, as the Duke has shewn his mind and temper to be so thoroughly odious, that had he married a dairy-maid, she would not have endured his various persecutions. I am rejoiced, for his charming wife's sake, that he has been provoked

into shewing his real character, as I should be grieved beyond measure if any reflection fell on so estimable a woman, especially if my Lord were to be included in it. Too much already has she suffered *for*, and perhaps *from*, him. The delicate Diana was not born for the creature of a sensualist; and the nobility of her mind would be as great a fault to such a husband, as it would be to herself a misfortune. The luckless girl who loved Lord Westbury, and lost him, could know no equal affliction but in being thus mismatched.

On reflection, I cannot but conclude that there must have been some cause, of which I am unapprised, for the report at York about the Duchess and my Lord. I can no otherwise account for his immediately ascribing my late reserve to *jealousy*, since he was at that moment wholly unconscious of Lady Killarney's manœuvre. With so perfect an esteem as I feel for both parties, I cannot dis honour either them or myself by a su-

spicion. From the frank heart of my love the story will one day or other transpire unasked.

The wind gives us such rude hints here down chimneys as wide as church towers, that as soon as the particulars concerning the new building are arranged, we shall gladly quit the old one to the architect. Our Christmas will, I hope, be passed with you at Arlington.

Your encomiums on Mrs. Montague delight me. I was going very arrogantly to say that I *knew* she would execute the trust properly; but I will be more modest, and only tell you that I hoped it. I cannot tell yet how my plan of keeping the dear children at Arlington will be approved by Lady Sarah, for she either did not, or would not, understand that they were now there for any other reason than want of room here. Ah! my dear, I must form my mind to bear the censure, which I can hardly escape; for how shall I ever convince people that I have the resolution to deny to myself

and others the pleasure of spoiling Lord Westbury's daughters? Yet at this very moment I as eagerly long to clasp them in my arms as if they had been nursed at my bosom; and always miss the precious girls when their father's absence leaves me leisure to think on any other being. My Lord and Marianne offer their services to you as sponsors, with your Cecilia. For the sake of the dear lost angel, and no vain fondness for my own name, your next, if a girl, shall bear it. If a boy, it will be Edward, undoubtedly. I hope you will not take to your chamber before I am your neighbour: I promise myself many a social hour during your confinement, for none can be so pleasant when once the danger is over. There is a delicacy in the dress, a softness in the offices, a tender languor in the air of a woman during her recovery, which, improving every natural grace, seems to supply a novelty to them all.

I have just received so comical letter from Lady Harington, that I

cannot resist sending it to amuse you. We have for some time seen that Sir George was not so faithful as his sweet little wife imagined: but it is always time enough to know a disagreeable when it no longer can be concealed. Her mode of treating her husband is not exactly that which I should have chosen; yet it is characteristic in her; and temper, after all, is perhaps our only rule on these occasions.

Why would she marry a man whom she loved not? Had she, like my Amelia, made a tender, rational choice, though with a limited fortune, her lot might have been enviable. The passion which awakened your sensibility led it towards the first of human objects--universal benevolence: while time, meliorating the flame of youth into invariable confidence, affecting esteem, and all the tender tranquillity of happiness, daily adds to these the unbounded tie of habitude, and the interesting one of offspring. *In* you my heart early expanded; *from* you

it learnt ineffable disdain of worldly maxims ; and while it demanded happiness, it well knew what alone could constitute it. Having profited by the theory I studied from your lives, I have gained all that I could desire, and more than I ever could deserve. Thus is your virtue, your happiness, the remote causes of mine, and an eternal argument of the power of a warm example : for I had youth, vanity, caprice, every weakness common to my sex ;—but I had delicacy, feeling, and a sacred sense of rectitude, which, at length, subdued my little errors, and regulated my whole conduct by the rules of conscience and the heart.

How does the wise man of old debase the knowledge he has acquired, when, while blest with every earthly advantage, he declares all to be vanity ! To the duly governed mind all is innocence, peace, and pleasure. The soul is, perhaps, no more capable of steadiness than the season ; but how know we whether the same instability may not give that the

same advantages? I confess I see nothing in this celebrated exclamation of Solomon but the mental ebullition of a voluptuary, who pined over the enjoyments which he had early exhausted; and am apt to conclude that, whether there ever lived a man more sage before him or not, many since have surpassed him in wisdom.—Do not tell my opinion to Mr. Forrester however, since he may say that it is not orthodox. Adieu!

Yours ever,

CECILIA WESTBURY.

LETTER CXLVI.

TO LADY WESTBURY.

From your sweet little study---Orange Hill.

I AM just in one of those humours when to contain myself seems utterly impossible. Speak or write I must; and, as it is not quite convenient to do the first, I will even condescend to the last:

so "come forth, my honest pen, which here I vow never to quit, till fortune gives me *measure of revenge.*"

I wish that you could see me at this present writing, my dear. One moment I laugh out like an ideot ; and the next, beat my toe with that impatient irregularity which ever marks a disordered mind. Then, seized with a musical fit, I hum a jig, while the tears stream down my cheeks.—Hang it ! since there is no medium between joy and grief in us poor helpless women, I may as well stick to my best friend of the two, and make myself *merry* with my misfortunes. Yes, stare as you will, my Cecilia, I repeat it —*my* misfortunes ! Some folks may find a husband no better than other folks have. You comprehend me ?—if not, you will before long ; unless you have suddenly lost that exquisite discernment which hitherto has marked your character. No grave airs, however, I charge you, my pretty little Percy ; (for, despite of law and the Court-calendar, so will I

continue to call you) : nothing surely on earth can be more tormenting or impertinent, when one is on the full fret, than your friends coming in with, "I told you this *before*"—"You cannot but *know*," &c.—when we remember the past too well, and yet were not the wiser for being forewarned.

Every hour since I left you has more and more disfigured your little unfortunate Sophia, which you would hardly think possible. The satin basket—embroidered pincushion—fine laced baby linen, nip'd and notched into a hundred fantastic forms,—all is arrived. All has been duly displayed to the fearing, hoping, wondering, fidgeting, misses ; who came in mere charity to sit with me. The well-brewed October was ready to broach, and every mouth in the parish ready to Guzzle it. In short, I was patiently waiting for my execution, when, lo ! I took it into my foolish head that some few floods of tears, which I amused myself with shedding, disturbed Sir

George, whom I tenderly voted into the next chamber.—What the deuce possessed me to be so vastly considerate?—example—example, I suppose!—Ah, how pleased am I to drag you in for a share of the blame, and lighten my own shoulders! Well! crying, praying, quaking, did I pass night after night, hardly closing an eye; when, about two this morning, I fancied that I heard the door of Sir George's apartment open, and some one pad into it without shoes. Up I started—for Grizzle herself, you must admit, could not have held out, circumstanced as I was;—but, fully resolved to catch the good-for-nothing wretches, and say whatever came into my head, I sunk down again to consider *what* that should be, and *how* I should utter it.—You must recollect that I declared against your passive doctrine at the time; for had you roused Lord Westbury with a good stroke of both hand and tongue, he would have saved his son and heir, and you had avoided a fit of sickness.

Having patiently waited till three o'clock, I arose, and taking a taper in one hand, while with the other I clasped my white night-gown, I entertained myself with the idea of personating my own ghost, should either party be awake; and with a solemn pace, throwing the middle door wide open, in I stalked. Fast asleep, however, was my faithless varlet, while, in no less sound a slumber, by his side I perceived Dolly, our ruddy dairy-maid, whom you nicknamed "Health, from her cottage of thatch":—recollect your own sense of disdain, then judge of mine. In truth, our scene was an absolute parody upon yours;—Sir George was not the youthful Westbury—Dolly no Lady Kil-larney—nor, alas! your friend the elegant Cecilia. The poor wretched girl was so wholly beneath my anger, that I would not let her know that she had excited it: yet I wished to find some ridiculous means of marking my discovery of the intrigue. Casting my eyes around

with that design, I fixed them on Dolly's blue worsted stockings, which were beautifully clocked with scarlet. One of these (in imitation of Lady Easy) I dexterously fastened to the knot at the crown of Sir George's night-cap ; which made so grotesque an appearance, that I was obliged to shuffle away, lest I should burst into a fit of laughter, and wake them both. To complete my vengeance, it appeared to me that I ought to quit the house, and leave him in a fine puzzle what had become of me. I nevertheless meant to leave a bitter letter behind me ; but drolery being just then my humour, I could not resist thus inditing it.—

“ High and mighty Sir !

“ HAVING discovered that it is your imperial pleasure to make yourself the grand-signior of your own domain, and people it with concubines, far be it from me to oppose so *rational, pious, and proper* a conduct. But as, according to all human appearance, the increase in your family

may be general, as well as sudden, I foresee that your house will hardly have room to accommodate your whole seraglio. Accept, therefore, the resignation of that apartment which was prepared for me, in favour of Dolly Haycock, your present favourite Sultana ; together with the costly habiliments of an expected heir. Fat Becky may take possession of the blue damask chamber : brown Rachel I think you may most aptly lodge in the crimson room, as it will favour her complexion. Lame Susan will be very well off in the chintz apartment ;--unless, indeed, the scullion should want it first.

“ Wishing that you may have a race equal to yourself in *virtue*, as well as *beauty*, I take my leave ; requesting you to observe, that the little wretch who makes my removal rather troublesome to me, is the only being whom *I* shall ever add to it.

“ I dare say you will pardon the little appendage which *I* have fixed to your cap, as *I* was doubtful whether it would other-

wise obtain its *due* appellation of a *foots-cap* :—except from those who had, like me, secret reasons for so terming it."

"P. S. As the ladies of your harem are rather more used to mops and brooms than pens and ink, I desire that they may be informed of my generous resignation in their favour, by hearing this letter read in full assembly in the pantry."

By the time I had written and sealed this,

Jocund day, stood tiptoe on the misty mountain's top.
Once more I stole into the chamber,
where both were yet asleep. I left my
letter by Sir George; and having double-
locked the two doors, and put both keys
in my pocket, I waked my own maid,
who has of late slept in a closet very
near, that she might be ready to sum-
mon aid whenever I should want it, and
bade her order the horses to the chaise,
as quick as possible, declaring myself
cramped to death, and resolved to enjoy

the fine morning. I would not let her be of my party ; and the early hour saved me from the busy offers of the men to attend : having therefore charged all the servants not to say one word of my airing to Sir George, I carelessly bade the postillion drive me round the park. No sooner, however, had I lost sight of the second gate, than I stopt the chaise, and told James that I had just recollect'd his master's particular charge to me, to send him as early as possible to H——, where, at the George, he would in all probability find Mr. Watkins impatiently waiting for the carriage ; but in case that gentleman should not yet be arrived, I charged him at his life to wait for said Mr. Watkins. This being a bye town, I knew Sir George could never suppose that I had taken myself thither ; and neither hearing of me, his man, nor his horses, would be obliged to conclude that I had commenced a treaty with the devil and vanished. Poor James was very importunate to drive *my Ladyship*

home first: but I declared myself more able to walk than ride; and alighting with an alertness which malice and vexation alone could have lent me, I set out towards home at a smart pace. Passing through the little shady turnstile, I however re-entered the park, unperceived by any one; and, sliding into the close walk, soon reached the little lovely habitation which your residence has to my remembrance hallowed.

It was yet so early that not a soul was up; but on my ringing, the old woman who nurses Sally (for she, I suppose you know, has been beforehand with me, and got a little girl) came down and opened the door. I was obliged to stop an inundation of "good jacks," and "dear me's," by rapping at Ned's chamber door, to tell him that I had escaped the hunt which was to be held at our house to-day, and meant to stay and spend it quietly with him; therefore desired that he would get up and give me some breakfast. Admire, I beseech you,

the adroitness with which I told the very truth, though I was certain that it would to Percival have quite another construction. I well knew too his rooted aversion to those noisy riotous parties, and was sure that he would not venture over his own threshold, at the chance of being snapt up by the sportsmen.

While this lazy wretch has been only thinking of getting up, I have written all this. What does the man mean?—to starve his unfortunate cousin I really believe. One would imagine that he was going to appear before his mistress, by the time he takes in dressing—or rather before his grandmother, for love knows not to be dilatory.

Whether it is because I always seek you in vain where once I was sure of finding you, or that these awkward wretches the men constantly litter a house, this sweet place no longer pleases me. I have a touch of my mother, after all, in my composition; for I can scarcely forbear clearing away the confusion

around me by tossing the superfluities out of the window. Not that my cousin has made the least alteration in the furniture or ornaments :—oh no ! he has too much deference for your taste to turn a flower-pot over, even though you had left it bottom upwards.

What would I give for a perspective glass, through which I might at this moment peep into the double-locked chamber !—Sir George and his dulcinea are surely awake by this time. I see him, in my mind's eye, half-laughing, and half-scolding, at my farewell epistle. Now interrogating the astonished servants through the door, and now rattling Dolly for dropping asleep at his imperial elbow : while the poor gawky girl stands curtsying and crying with a most rueful humility ; eyeing at intervals the elevated stocking, which she dares not remind *his honour* (a mighty well applied term, is it not, to these kind of gentry ?) of.— Fifty keys are vainly tried ;—Sir George looks out of the window ;—broken bones

present themselves at the prospect.—Violence is at last the only measure; and the heavy door, after a variety of efforts, gives way to the heavier shoulders of the footmen. Dolly creeps through the assembled train of her fellow-servants, who shrink back, and stare at her as though they were all vestals. “*Where* is your lady, you sir?”—“Gone, Sir George.”—Hey! what? *gone*?—Gone where?—Here, Tom, saddle Dido—Jack, bring my boots.—*Gone* indeed!—I will bring her back in the crack of a whip—I will teach her to be less jocose in future.” But when, after catechising his whole household, he finds himself still in ignorance of my destination, things wear a more serious aspect. He once more summons all his *fellows* or *scoundrels* (as he frequently terms his domestics, though I think to render the mode of speech proper, the *or* should be omitted), to dispatch every one a different way, that he may be certain of following in the right track; while he strides about waiting the information:—an agreeable

jumble passing through his brain, of preaching mothers, censorious relations, aggravating friends, and unmanageable lawyers : an eternal separation the least possible evil :—till, fully sensible of his own fault, he levels his rage on the right person, and——There 's an end ;—for now I behold entering, tea, muffins, and Ned Percival, with his stockings about his heels, and your name on his lips.

* * * * *

No old-fashioned examples for me, my dear !—Io ! triomphé !—I have reversed the book of Esther, and made my *Ahasuerus*, gently advancing, kiss the golden sceptre ; which I with singular graciousness mercifully extended to him. Altogether, this has been a curious adventure !

The whole day did I leave Sir George upon the rack, while I maliciously enjoyed the confusion at home ; which I could easily judge of, as now one man rode, and another ran, to and fro in the park. Ned, imputing all this to the hunt

dinner, sat shrugging his shoulders, and thanking me every minute for having saved him from the severe penance called good-fellowship. I was quite musical too at times ; though “ I'll never be married again !” was the song that popt uppermost, do what I would. I was piqued, as our neighbour on the hill says ; and at times felt half-resolved to turn Ned out of his own house, and, fixing my residence there, stand a regular siege. Then again, I censured myself for having treated such an aggravating infidelity with so much good-humour ; lest the provoking wretch should think that these frolics might be in time as amusing to me as himself. “ Yet, hang it !” cried I, to my own heart, “ shall he make me a tyrant, because he is unkind ? No, I will e'en allow my humour to take its course, and congratulate myself on the moderation of my feelings, without raising a storm, which no one has a right to raise who is not more irritated.”

Your old harp is among the trea-

sured reliques of Percival, and some of your songs. After dinner he took his flute, and we agreed to adjourn to the shady seat which you have consecrated to love, and we to you. We were both slaving away, to form something like harmony, when Sir George appeared, striding through the garden in haste, and chafing with vexation, at the vain enquiries which he had made for me. Though I was half shaded by the trees, he saw that Ned was accompanying a woman ; but never did it enter his head she could be his own wife, till he was close by me. Judge of his astonishment when, playing and singing in the easiest and most degagée attitude which her present shapeless figure allowed, he saw that identical angry nymph whom he imagined fifty miles on her way to mamma, with her finger in her eye, to complain how sadly spousy had used her ! He could not so soon recover this, but that I had leisure to form my resolution. At length he ventured to advance, and with

a confused and humble voice said, " My dearest Sophy, I am more sorry—more ashamed, than even you could wish."—" What 's the bar, Ned?" cried I, continuing to strum ; then talking *at*, rather than *to*, the culprit, " I am mighty glad you are grown so modest. This is the first time, Sir George, that you ever apologised for being drunk."—" Madam!" returned he, stretching his large grey eyes, and almost concluding from my composure that he certainly must have been so, and had sinned no further. But espying, as I guess, a little roguery peeping from some corner of mine, he added, " *Mad*, you certainly mean."—" Ay, mad, or drunk, or both.—We do n't seem to understand each other, then how should you, Ned, understand either?" resumed I, " You could not dream what I did last night.—I will tell my cousin my ridiculous dream, I am determined."—" Dear Sophy, hold your tongue this one time," cried my spouse, half squeezing me to death, through a mere transport of

good-humour at finding me not implacable, "and never shall your sleep again be so disturbed." Neither tears, anger, contempt, nor severity, could have had half the effect of this satirical singular conduct. "I find you on a happy spot; abide by the laws of her who once reigned here. I owe you an acknowledgement; nor am I," cried he, falling at my feet, "ashamed thus to make it." I drew off my wedding ring, and holding it up to him—"Pledge your faith," cried I, "by that which at once declares you perjured. I gave in exchange for this my earthly happiness; and if you should break your second vow, I may, perhaps, chuck away the golden fetter: and the tête-à-tête I may next be found in, shall not be with *my cousin*. A word to the wise. I never in my life was governed by any thing but love; and having told you this, I must e'en take your word for the future, since I don't see how I can help it." The scape-grace first kissed the ring, and then humbly replacing it, paid

the same compliment to each fair finger, with due respect and repentance ; while Ned, to whom Sir George had transferred his surprise, began to doubt whether he had not drank the bottle extraordinary at which I hinted as above.

Thus was peace ratified between us ; and the servants, who had separately stood the brunt of their master's ill-humour, hailed with transport the return of your little friend : though not I fancy without cursing their thick heads for having sought me so ingeniously in every place but the one where I was to be found. Mrs. Dolly very prudently disappeared before I went home ; and, upon infinite intreaty, I have condescended again to take possession of the demesnes, goods, and chattels, which I so bountifully assigned away this morning.

What a fine effect has a fracas in matrimonial life ! All is honey-moon again with Sir George ; and " Who 'll be so happy, so happy as we !" his only song. Were I in the humour to long for the in-

estimable vine which once shaded the throne of Darius, Cleopatra's remaining pearl, or, to descend a little from my altitude, the enormous diamond in the Mogul's crown, my lovey would make no more of promising me any unique of this kind, than a roasted potatoe. Can I study no exquisite extravagance while my reign lasts? Help me, ye modern matrons! to some dear pleasure, valuable only in proportion to what it costs! Alas! my poor head has no genius at such discoveries; and my best friends are all so marvellously rational, that I shall not have the eclat of throwing away my husband's money, though I have caught him in the humour to allow me to do so; and never again may have that honour. But I forget;—the spirit of the pleasure would consist, perhaps, in his denial.

Pr'ythee. pray for me night and morning, and write to me all day long. I mean to lay your letters under my pillow, as antidotes to the melancholy

books, and as melancholy lectures, which my kind mother will so generously lavish on this solemn occasion. I expect her to-morrow. God forgive me ! but since the evil hour must come, I wish the boy (for I think it shall be a boy, now Sir George has appeased me ; otherwise I meant to punish him with a little pug of a girl not more agreeable than myself) would make his appearance to-night. Mammas are always so important, authoritative, and busy, on these doughty occasions ! and one has but little inclination to implicit compliance, while in the very act of suffering. Half a word, however, in the present state of affairs, will insure Sir George's approbation of all my whims ; and he can do any thing, as mamma tells him, with her ; because he always hears her with patience ; —that is, I add in a whisper, that he has more ingenuity than his little wife, and can sleep with his eyes open.

Do you know that I am meditating to bring up a new fashion ;—an humble imitation, it is true, of some Indian na-

tions. What think you of my providing a white robe for Sir George? (it is only keeping his shroud ready made, entre nous); that he may take the ceremonials off my hands, though he cannot the suffering. Is not this a bright device? You can guess how I shall like *sitting up*, as it is called, to exhibit my laced robe de chambre, and ruby-faced brat, to all my country caudle-drinking neighbours. Now Sir George would really shine in my place, and entertain such visitors much better than I can, by talking to them *in their own way*: for very virtuous matrons have made me blush up to the ears on some of these occasions. Heaven mend me if I err! but I had rather associate with some individuals on whom the world has cast a blight, than many of those *best of wives*, who think that there is no harm in saying any thing, provided they do no ill, and the male creatures are out of hearing. I dare believe that you will adopt the idea.—Admirable! to see a beard as prickly as a holly at Christmas,

puffing out a rich laced night-cap, and a pair of tremendous red fists holding up the squalling youngster between the finger and thumb! as you have seen the giant (in a print) do Master Tommy Thumb himself, in that little antique wight's right famous history.

Deuce on your starched visitors, for keeping you from her who so dearly loves you! In truth, had I not known your house was already too full, thither should I have flown for shelter. Not but you might have been for patching up some clumsy reconciliation : so, for aught I know, it may be as well as it is. Your sister had the luck to be on a visit to the Alstons during the uproar ; and, on her return home, was so astonished at my recital that she is hardly herself yet.—“Sir George, *too!*—Well, all men are alike !” cries she, shrugging her shoulders.—“Pardon me, Marianne ! can you in conscience say that Lord Westbury and Sir George are so ?”—“Strange creature !” replies she, striving to smother a smile

as sweet as your own, "will nothing make you serious?"—"Nothing sooner than your gaiety, my dear; but am I not then secure of laughing as long as I live, for your Damon seems quite incorrigible?"—"I do not understand you, Lady Harrington."—"Indeed you do, Miss Rivers; the tone of your voice assures me of it."—"I deserve this for leaving my sister to accompany you."—"You deserve more, my sweet girl,—the very man who induced the complaisance: and I hope he will make you a good husband."—"Husbands! I hate them."—"So says every Miss who cannot get the one whom she chooses: but, well-managed, they rather improve society."—"You have great reason to think so, truly."—"I have no reason against saying so:—we are not bound to speak exactly what we think."—"Well! let me never hear you complain of the one you have got, and you shall never hear me wail for him whom, you say, I cannot get."—"What! you will pine in thought,

and with a green and yellow melancholy—. No, no, my dear Marianne, I am too much your friend to allow that ; so, Ned— !” and up I threw the window.—“ For Heaven’s sake, Lady Harrington, say not a word to him !”—“ Oh, your humble servant ! just now there was nothing to tell.”—“ Lord ! what is there now but your own mad whims and surmises ?”—“ Ah, Marianne ! he need only look at your glowing cheeks for confirmation.”—“ I must e’en run away,” cried the sly girl, “ for nobody ever got the last word of you.”

And away went Miss Marianne ; but no further than the dining parlour, whither Percival flew, warm and glowing from cricket, with his bat in his hand, and gracefully drest in white with green ribbons. His hair in that agreeable disorder which is but a more dangerous vanity. I hear him flattering her at this very moment at the window under mine ; and the exquisite prude is shewing her white hands in mixing him some sherbet.

I have half a mind to steal down, and catch them. Is her affectation to be tolerated by your

S. HARINGTON ?

P. S. Thinking only of catching another, I have been finely caught by mamma, who arrived half an hour ago.—Such marvels!—such surveys!—Ah, misericordia! if this happens once a-year, the men had need be all Westburys.

N O T E.

SEVERAL months elapsed in domestic and uninterrupted harmony. Lord and Lady Westbury passed the spring in London; which the former only quitted for a short time, to mediate between Mr. and Mrs. Clifford, who lived on very unhappy terms in Bath.

LETTER CXLVII.

TO LORD WESTBURY.

London.

YOU had not the courage to intrust me with your malicious intention of marring that tender melancholy which your absence, my love, must at once produce, and give me leisure to indulge in, lest I should begin to reproach, and withhold some of the exquisite follies that you are so fond of betraying me into. Let me see—is this not—yes, it is—the very first separation we have known since we became one; and, entre nous, I hope it will be the last. I had such a dose of absence as a lover, that I may claim an absolute exemption as a wife; and the very reason you gave for leaving me at home ought to have induced you to take me with you: for what are fatigues of

body to anxiety of mind? There is, alas! no peace on earth for me but in your presence;—years of consuming anguish have sufficiently proved that. And surely I am well!—Better, at least, than ever I have been since you first taught me the sad delight of loving.

And what a curious way did you find out to console me! A truly masculine one it must be owned! I was amazed to see the Trevilians and their friends arrive in a body to dine here. A social party could only more sensibly remind me, had it been possible for one moment to forget it, that he was absent whose gaiety and convivial spirit endear this house as well to its inmates as visitors. I could almost take this for an artifice of your vanity, did you not know that you cannot exalt yourself in my opinion, and are above the proud humility of seeking to do so in that of your friends.

But did you recollect that I should have your place to fill as well as my own, and must be diligent indeed to

execute the double duty? I made but a poor figure I fancy. I was often lost in thought on your probable distance from home, and found myself recalled only by the sound of my own name: nor should, perhaps, have heard that, had it not been yours. The company were not much flattered by the vacant accompanying smile which I sometimes, in good manners, bestowed upon a jest which I had not heard.

How shall I contrive to punish you adequately? What do you most hate?—Let me see:—May your bed be, like mine, so uncomfortable that you may not be able to sleep in it! or, should fatigue overcome you, may the image of no greater belle than your own wife gild your dreams! May your whole time be spent among a set of women, the least talker of whom may vie with Mrs. Trevilian, yet not have her talents to embellish the fault! And now I have only to wish that their subject may be *scandal*, to be even with you; not only for what you

have done, but for all that you ever *can* do, to disoblige me.—Yet, not so, on recollection. Have you not desired Lady Sarah to drag me with her to Windsor?—Arbitrary man!—However, as you thought my dubious situation a sufficient cause for leaving me here, her Ladyship shall e'en do the same; though I dare say I shall then have as many couriers to inform themselves of the state of my daily health as if I were the Grand Monarque. Having, however, taken the liberty of dispensing with my obedience in this instance, I shall not reprove you for giving another person authority to rob me of the opportunity of brooding over your idea, the second dearest pleasure of my life, when in yourself you had deprived me of the first.

To shew that I have not wholly shaken off my allegiance, I must tell you that I went with your aunt yesterday to Court; where I made a discovery which could not but mortify my self-love. I only served, it seems, to remind every one

whom I saw that you were not there; nor had occasion to speak on any subject but your absence. If others miss you thus, how must I? Return quickly then, my Edward; restore to my heart its only object, in your own;—to my eyes their only delight, in your person;—and to my character its only consequence, by reflecting yours on me. Remember, till that happy hour my prayers must be all *for*, Heaven will, I hope, forgive me, if some of them are *to*, you. Surely, if love and religion did not equally explode canonisation, I might claim a red-letter day in cupid's calendar, to doubly sanctify the name of Cecilia: for have I not wrought a kind of miracle in preserving undiminished my husband's affection and my own, after both have long been convinced that neither is an angel?

You perhaps perceive that I have the vanity to depend upon your quick return, by the gay manner in which I urge it: but, indeed, I only make the request from habit. No,—I would not *demand*

even happiness at your hands. Use your own judgement, and let that supply the fond defect in your wife's. You will easily find out that I am in health and spirits, for my pen would as soon betray the contrary as my countenance: and fail not so effectually to reconcile these tiresome wranglers, that I may not suffer for their quarrel, at least an age to come.

I am not certain that my last paragraph is not worse than the former, by seeming to call upon a generosity which I have so often experienced. It will perhaps only give force to the feeling which I meant to counteract; but if you love your daughters, stay awhile at Bath. No one now divides with them my attention: they are my constant companions during the day, and sleep with me alternately. Louisa has had advice; the physicians concur in saying, that we must not decide upon her constitution from her complexion, which owes its exquisite delicacy to the purest temperament. I am solely intent on forming the hearts of the dear

creatures ; and leave all external accomplishments to other instructors. Fain would I

Keep each passion down, however dear :—
Trust me, the tender are the most severe.

And yet, if it is indeed necessary always to exemplify the precept, where shall I learn that stoicism which I would inculcate ? Sensibility is a plant too delicate to live in every heart, nor are those the happiest in which it flourishes: Louisa has the promise of too much feeling, and her sister of too little. A sweet and innocent thoughtfulness seems to guide even the childish pursuits of the former, while an intuitive sprightliness decides at the moment every wish of Henrietta. Yet there is a quick haughtiness in that sweet child which we ought to watch and subdue : for I have observed, in all little wrangles she has address enough already to extort the concession from her elder sister, whose gentle nature rather disposes her to yield, than maintain her rights by obstinacy. Character

is perceptible at an earlier age than is commonly supposed : sensibility is Louisa's, but exquisite penetration her sister's; by which means one will excite uniform admiration, but the other find a thousand ways to the heart. Already do I feel this impression, and forbid myself a hundred times a-day from making any distinction ; yet still find my eyes often partially turned towards your little likeness. Ah ! why did not nature render both children so ?—Henrietta too has your engaging freedom of manners ; and while her timid sister waits to be caressed, that charmer climbs to caress me with your own smile, and a wild irresistible ardour, which, without verging towards boldness, has every charm of frankness. Fine havock these two girls will hereafter make, with so much beauty, and characters so distinct ! I seem to see you and myself shrunk into inhabitants of two snug elbow-chairs, and shaking our grey heads (alas ! they will be grey then), whenever chance may render us

witnesses of those youthful follies that we now think so diverting. And will this be, my Edward?—Yes—among all the old people with whom I ever met, such is the insensible change; and though I mean, and so I hope do you, to be a pattern for all the antiques to come, we can hardly excel *every* one who has gone before us. How like you my grave reflection?—not *very* much perhaps;—then turn to the glass, and contemplate the one which though time may change to my eyes, it never can to my heart.

Once more do I unfold this, which you may think has been opened by another, did I not tell you the culprit. But it is ever my careless way, when writing to those whom I love: I always fancy that something is forgotten, or something is imperfect. In fact, I seldom please myself, when anxious to please another; and in the attempt scribble thrice as much as I intended.

Our little girls, by interrupting, very properly remind me to conclude. Louisa

has written you a lilliputian epistle, and would fain burn her fingers to seal it : while Henrietta sits perched before my toilet in a new morning cap, which the milliner has just sent me, and surveys the little face that peeps out of it with as much satisfaction as she will a dozen years hence, when she finds it the admiration of the 'drawing room.

What could I open this for ?—Oh ! I now recollect—it is to say that we each send you a kiss. I will not so far offend your sagacity as to tell you where to find our favours, but should you suppose them near your own name, you will not be much mistaken,

Once more, my best beloved, adieu!—The eagerness which induces me to thus scribble before I could hear from you, will most feelingly evince how truly every pleasure centres in yourself, of your own

CECILIA WESTBURY.

LETTER CXLVIII.

TO LADY WESTBURY.

Bath.

I KNOW that I cannot better convince you, my own Cecilia, of the pleasure which your unexpected epistle gave me, than by answering it directly. I will believe your health and spirits good, my best love, because you, who are all unblemished truth, assure me of it: and I cannot reproach myself for having left you a little while, since I had no other motive in doing it than to restore to another married pair that happiness which you alone convinced me was possible to human nature. Fondly as my heart throbs to the soft flattery of yours, never shall I presume to reckon among my merits the deserving it, nor among my faults the not desiring to do so.—Happy Cecilia! thy own sacred consciousness of purity and goodness, entitles thee in-

deed to give praise ; and happy, too, thy Westbury, if only in knowing all thy value, and his own demerit !

Your wishes travelled faster than the post, for I am half dead for want of rest, since I left your side.—Were I a Turk, I should fancy my wakeful nights ominous; but as it is, I place them to the account of anxiety. Is it not Cowley who elegantly says to sleep—

“ For betwixt thee, and those that love,
Never can an agreement be ;—
Thou scorn’st th’ unhappy, and the happy thee” ?

Had my Cecilia conquered the refinement in her own nature, and fairly told me what she supposed the event of this journey would prove, I fancy I should have spared it. Nothing reigns in George’s house but extravagance, rage, and confusion. The lady is so vain and foolish, and the gentleman so selfish and haughty, that if they ever agree again, it will be only to punish me for my vain attempt at conciliation. Heaven offers large rewards to the peace.

makers; and truly so it ought, since there alone can they hope to find any: at least if I may judge from my own little experience.

The unaccountable tales that we have heard in town of the voluptuous extravagance of both husband and wife, fall very short of the fact. The house is as handsome as any here; but not at all above their income; the furniture is French, magnificent, singular, and ill taken care of: the train of servants, and number of horses, would beggar me.

I found Mrs. Clifford literally confined to her apartment, and my brother lording it over the rest of this disorderly mansion. I drove up to the door, and believe that the sight of my carriage was as disagreeable to both as it was unexpected. The first who tells a tale has a great advantage, of which my sister-in-law seemed sensible; for her Abigail met me in the hall, and importuned me to walk up immediately to her Lady's apartment. George, however, made his

appearance, and dragged me into the parlour; bidding the eager damsel tell her Lady that I should wait on her to-morrow. I was not quite charmed with his thus deciding for me; but of course concluded that his wife had verified a husband's worst fear.—It was *you*, my shrewd observing love, who once said that George had not studied the law for nothing; since the talent of displaying the best, and hiding the worst, of a cause, is his in perfection. The gross vices of those whom he likes, nay, indeed, his own, he with a graceful fluency converts into “elegant weaknesses,”—“ebullitions of imagination,”—“shades indispensably necessary to fine pictures.” Were I to credit his florid account of both, not a single fault had he, nor one virtue his wife. I, who know him better perhaps than he knows himself, could, however, easily discern that he had not imputed a failing to her that was not inherent to his own nature; while some, upon which he elaborately

descanted, I really believe, originally formed no part of hers. His turn for expence was boundless, when his fortune was trifling; of consequence, with the power of indulgence, he was not likely to limit it.—Yet it was for *her*, he assured me, that he sold his house in town—To please *her*, he bought this in Bath—Nor was he at all aware that nothing less than the *finest* furniture, the *finest* horses, and the *finest* parties, would satisfy *her*.—Well, these she had, and was in consequence the fashion. A love of play soon rendered her the willing dupe of powdered knaves, and grey-headed sharpening dowagers.—All his admonitions she ridiculed, nor could be made to feel any thing but the want of money: even that she felt not long.—A train of lovers were added to her suite, and from among them her vanity selected the Duke of Fernham, who forgot, in her favour, his habitual parsimony.—With him she had long been talked of, and notoriously indiscreet, if not guilty, a point

which was very doubtful as yet. However, finding his remonstrances to be ineffectual, and that neither her own honour nor his could restrain her from unlimited indulgence, he had e'en put it out of her power to injure either further, by locking her up, till the musty mansion in Cumberland could be prepared for her residence.—That thither he meant to conduct her himself, and he should leave her there in the charge of a trusty person, to learn wisdom at leisure.—While he was running through this easy self-acquitting harangue, I made several reflections. I could not but call to mind that he never lost his patience till she had lost her father; and that her large fortune would be his, at least if he survives her. There was something extremely shocking in meditating to use the advantage which he had just gained, to her utter ruin. I could not but ask him why, in the first place, he had married a fool? or why, after she had been tutored into a rigid economy, did he plunge her

into the gay world, and cherish in her, by his own example, the rage for expensive pleasures,—pleasures, which people of little sense and less knowledge, would always think the very essence of existence? Why associate her with a set of women who set at nought the matrimonial vow? And, above all, why had he given her the fatal example?—He answered, with spleen enough, “that he should never have married a fool but to make his fortune; that he would as soon retire to the Grand Chartreuse, and utter two words a-week for life, as rusticate with the ideot who had fallen to his lot, in the old crazy mansion which her father had left her, with jovial fools for his daily companions, and rats and owls for his midnight ones. Though, had it once entered his head that indulgence would make her turn out such an obstinate virago, by Heavens! there *she* should have staid, and fed the chickens to all eternity! However, as her present conduct justified him in the assertion of

his authority, he should soon teach madam discretion."—"Do you recollect, George," returned I, "that you have it first to learn? Can you justify to your own conscience this mode of arranging things? Is it possible that you can thus coolly throw all the weight of your mutual faults on a young creature, who knew not good from evil till she knew you? It is not singing a stave with the clerk, or bowing when the minister bows, that proves our religion. It is not forbearing pleasures which we never knew, that marks our morality. She loved you, and might have been formed by you for the world, into which she might have been introduced by degrees."—"Fine preaching, my Lord!" cried he, passionately; "and singularly proper from *you*."
—"From whom could it be more proper, George? since you have reaped the whole benefit of my early experience, who can urge in my own excuse, youth, ignorance of life, and a blind extravagant passion. However, I do not mean to

trouble you either with my opinion, advice, or interference. If you cannot live decently with your wife, part with her without disgrace, in compliment to her family and your own. Allow her such a share of the fortune which she inherits as may silence those busy observers, who will not fail, otherwise, to say, that you were willing to *get*, or *get rid*, of her *any way*." He rapped out a volley of oaths to assure me that she should never know the command of five guineas again.—"No, no, he did not mean to humour her in that favourite project of a separate maintenance. She had plagued him enough, and now he should return the compliment."—I took my hat, rang the bell, and with a cold severity of countenance told him, that I should leave Bath early in the morning, and without seeing his wife, because I would not, if possible, own that, of the two, I was most ashamed of my own brother. This bitter declaration at once, I fancy, alarmed him, either as to the assistance I could

give in pecuniary matters, or as to his aunt's future dispositions ; (for he is ever alive to self-interest) : nor did he overlook, probably, the opinion which the public might form. He entreated me to stay at least the night with him ; and told the servant who entered that he had rang to hasten supper. I saw, with astonishment, how meanness of conduct brings with it timidity ; for a very slight exertion of mind on my part had calmed his turbulent passions. He now found himself quite disposed to qualify ; and besought me to allow for the difference of our situations. What did *I* know of that complicated misery--a bad wife? --Oh, my Cecilia ! guess how sweet to the heart which adores thee was this involuntary tribute, from the very lips which once profaned thy excellence so basely !--“ Easy was it,” he added, “ to hear with indifference those insults which his deep indignation, perhaps, deprived of their force, even while he repeated them.” He ended with a declaration

that, when I had seen and heard all their *goings on* (as he termed it), he would listen to my advice with patience ; and take as much of it as he could reconcile to his feelings. I replied, that he did me great injustice if he supposed me unconcerned as to either his happiness, honour, or estimation in the world ; but that our near affinity more particularly obliged me to make candour, not partiality, the rule of my advice : and, although he had thought proper to taunt me with the extravagance of Henrietta, he must allow that I took so much shame to myself for my erroneous choice, as never to make her unhappy, or constrain her pleasures ; notwithstanding she had not brought me a shilling of the fortune which I allowed her to spend.

The evening elapsed in a recapitulation of those minuter grievances which it would give you as little pleasure to hear as me to repeat. Yet, at intervals, I could discern that your sister was nearer to his heart than he would own ; but not one

trace of love, esteem, or even pity, for the sister he has given me, could I ever discover; and therefore I no longer thought of effecting a temporary reconciliation, which would on the next quarrel only drive both parties into fresh interacy.

After supper, I requested to know of the lady of the mansion at what time in the morning she would allow me the honour of waiting on her. She sent word that she should be glad to see me at breakfast if agreeable. Alas! in the morning I was not to find my breakfast, nor my darling wife, as usual, in the library, where we so sweetly enjoy that meal, tête-à-tête. Day seemed hardly broke at ten o'clock in this house, and about eleven my servant told me that George's valet, who, it seems, is keeper of the keys to his lady's apartment, attended to conduct me thither. The late hour made me imagine that the imprisoned fair had been sacrificing to the graces, in honour of me; but, so far from that, she

hardly took the trouble to receive me with decency. All around a magnificent dressing-room her rich clothes, ornaments, and letters, were tossed in heaps ; as if at times she had amused herself with destroying whatever was valuable. Close to her chair lay a bracelet set with diamonds, encircling George's picture ; which, by the broken crystal, she, I suppose, had stamped on. Her hair, half loose, half powdered, was slightly tucked under her usual unbecoming cap, which was most negligently on one side. A morning-gown was clasped by only a single pin, over a bosom which by the bye was hardly half covered ; and she rested her head upon hands which bear no resemblance in size or colour to the delicate ones that now hold this paper. Tears of rage and disdain, as she sat by the fire, were making tracks through the faded paint on her cheeks, She rose at my entrance ; but, uncertain of my disposition towards her, hovered between contempt and civility, as if my

bow would determine her to either. It was not in my nature to withhold that politeness which she, as a woman merely, might claim; on this she gladly advanced, and obliged me to accept a favour that I could very readily have dispensed with; then turning her eyes round with anger, while her maid was endeavouring, by increasing in other respects the confusion, to clear a chair for me—"In a pretty place, truly," cried my wise sister, "have I the honour of receiving your visit, my Lord!" Not willing to make Mrs. Abigail a party in our conference, I was guilty of the impoliteness of curtailing her speech, and answered—"Ladies dignify every place, Mrs. Clifford; and to their dressing-rooms the proudest men are ambitious of being welcome."—"Oh, my Lord, for all these fine speeches, you know mine to be my prison; and when you let me understand whether your brother's conduct has your approbation, I shall better judge how I am to conduct myself."—"Excuse

me, madam, I cannot constitute myself an arbiter in points so delicate as matrimonial differences; though were I made so, I do not think that either party would have cause to arraign my justice."—" Ah, my Lord! you had always a heavenly temper: had your brother resembled you, I had been the happiest of women;" (you see that she had a mind to wheedle me out of my *justice*) ; " but he is a cruel—vile—base—ungrateful wretch!"—" Softly, dear madam, I intreat; women lose their most touching grace when they part with gentleness. *Anger* is a coarse; a manly passion.—Besides," casting my eye on the maid who was still officiously attending, " I am not accustomed to enlarge on interesting subjects before any witnesses."—" Oh! you need not mind that, my Lord; not a servant in this house but knows what a tyrant Mr. Clifford is; and I shall say nothing that I should mind *his* hearing."—" You must, madam, excuse my hearing any thing disrespectful and improper said of my

brother, and your husband, at all ; much more in the presence of his servants."

—“ You hear my Lord !” cried she, turning fretfully to the damsels (for by this time another had entered, with some part of the tea equipage), while she looked as if she had previously ordered them to stay, probably that they might watch my behaviour, and afterwards assist her to decypher my intentions. The two abigails, however, did retreat ; though with an air which implied that they wished me, and my delicacy too, at the devil. A long, a very singular, conversation ensued ; from whence I drew such conclusions, as made me glad that I had left the beloved of my heart behind, for in this house *she* could not have taken up her abode without impropriety, though I might. Sometimes Mrs. Clifford was all regret and complaint, abounding in appeals to Heaven and me. Then, in one moment, she flew to the contrary extreme ; and became at once virulent, reproachful, and ill-

bred. One truth, however, was but too apparent—that George had not imputed a single fault to his wife of which he had not been grossly guilty himself;—that, devoted to gaming, his table had been extravagantly supported for, and surrounded with, a herd who preyed upon his fortune;—that his propensity to the odious vice had probably first given this poor ignorant young creature a taste for it, as well as a dissolute profuse habit of living. It was obvious that he had never attached himself to her, since, even from the first days of their marriage, she convinced me that he had indulged in variety of mistresses. It was in pursuing one of these, who had measures to keep with the world, that George, she said, first discovered an *innocent* correspondence which she carried on with the Duke of Fernham. Not all the indignation that flashed from my eyes, and glowed on my complexion, could prevent her entering into a defence of this egregious impropriety; which she ended by assuring me,

that she had never granted him more than the privileges of a friend. I stopt her at this point, with an air I believe decisive enough :—“ I am sorry, Mrs. Clifford, you are yet to learn that the married woman who hears of love twice from the same person, sins against Heaven, her husband, and herself.”—Would you believe that she first gave this observation a look of the deepest contempt, and the next moment found it hard to suppress a fit of laughter? Still, however, she adhered to her first justification.—“ What did she do that the most admired women did not?”—“ How futile an argument is this, Madam!” returned I; “ can you set your conscience like your diamonds to the fashion of the day? and are good and evil no longer among the distinctions in society, as well as nature? While the titled moppets, who are only the dolls on which tradesmen exhibit fantastic attempts at singularity, remain your models on points of the utmost importance, what hope can your

real friends have of your reformation ? If indeed you determine from this moment to study your mind more, and the *fashion* less—if, with a proper portion of your own fortune, you can be content to fix your residence in the seat of your ancestors, under the eye of any person of established character—your own may yet be saved, by the stipulation which I will make on your behalf with my brother."

—“ It is gone ! it is already lost !” cried she, with indignant delight ; “ I would even have it so, were it but to punish the insolent wretch who dared lock me up in my own house.” *His* face she was however resolved never more to see : *me* she *thanked* (*entre nous*, with a kind of thankless air), but did not need my Lordship’s interposition to recover *her own* : and if my domineering brother still retained her fortune, she was no longer a child, or a fool, to be preached into obedience. She well knew that there were laws in her favour no less than his, and

she should avail herself of the knowledge.

--Nay, if not——.

Here the lady had overshot herself, and stopt short. I looked at her a moment in silence; then, after the pause—
“ *If not, Mrs. Clifford, what would you do?*”

“ Fly to the verge of the earth with any man who is willing to rescue and protect me!” cried she, bursting into tears of equal bitterness and rage.

“ Unhappy, misguided young creature,” sighed I, “ who *will* not be saved from misery and disgrace! allow me after this to interfere no further. I leave you to learn prudence from heart-rending experience, since harsh measures alone will prevent your misconduct. I was willing to protect, to act a brother’s part by you; but I plainly see that you will not allow me to do so.—If, upon recollecting yourself, you perceive any advantage which you may derive from my visit, that I can render you without disgracing myself, I must request you to

write to me ; for I shall never more attend on Mrs. Clifford." I withdrew determinately, at once, with due politeness, though some disgust.

You will think this severe adieu not consistent with that devoted respect which I ever shew the sex ; but, indeed, my dear, George's wife is no longer the same creature she appeared at first launching into life. The pride of her acquired rank is now blended with the obstinacy of ignorance, and a kind of harsh knowledge of the world which so very a rustic could not in the time fairly have gained. That libertine Fernham has, I dare say, accomplished her ruin ; and, perhaps, even at this moment absolutely dictates every thing she says or does : for when a quarrel ends in locking up the lady, I hardly imagine that any key can be so constructed as to exclude interested persons.—Perhaps the Duke thinks to dishonour my brother is an indirect kind of revenge on me : for I am told he obstinately asserts that I am the

only cause of the aversion which the Duchess openly avows to himself; nor has discernment enough to imagine the greater one that subsists in his own want of merit. Our sister-in-law is such a strange compound—so dubious in her very look—so vulgarly polite—so politely vulgar—that, though young and pretty, it seems impossible she should excite tenderness.—Not that the Duke of Fernham has refinement enough to seek *any*: and the mistress who costs him nothing, has always, perhaps, charms sufficient for such a miserly libertine.

As to expence, the pair must have been lavish beyond imagination; since all the large sums of money which George has received since his marriage are not only dissipated, but his debts amount to the value of the premises he purchased here—the only solid remains of the personal fortune. I never knew till now by what fault Mrs. Clifford had disobliged her father so much as to make him leave her in her husband's power;

but learnt yesterday that it was by exchanging her mother's jewels for a modern set !

Here then remain I, in a most curious situation :—having vainly assured each party by turns that *he* or *she* is most in the wrong. To subdue self-love has always been the most hard and glorious effort of philosophy ; nor can either of these whom I would humble, guess how willing I am to serve them, jointly or separately. I cannot think, however the wife may deserve punishment, that she should receive it from the hand of him who first shewed her the seducing path of sin ; and who owes his right over her only to an ill-placed fondness : nor yet can I give up the dignity of my sex so far, as to wish my brother to overlook his own disgrace.—As, however, he seems fully resolved to assert his privileges, I think I may fairly do the same by mine ; and insist upon his allotting his weak wife a handsome portion of her fortune, under the eye of her own relations : or

else, I shall add, that I am authorised in leaving him to regulate his affairs himself, which will not, I fancy, suit him at this present writing.

And now, my dearest, are you not more than avenged of this self-undone man, who is enveloped in a snare which he has woven for himself; —sighing (as I am sure he does) for your sister, and embroiled with the one whom he has imprudently given me, till he is forced to fly to expensive pleasures, that he may forget both? Do not even you pity him? —Ah! needless is the question, to the gentlest, as well as noblest, of human hearts! Above the mean triumph which words might express, my Cecilia asserts only the sublime superiority of action. To *my* wife, George now looks up with wonder; and to her husband with envy. —Envy—of what?—That which he might equally have commanded;—peace—tenderness—virtue: for gold and vanity he too late finds, will not supply the place of either to the heart—the aching

heart. When he is away, I feel all the effect of habitude—the strong, the fraternal tie; but whenever he is here, I find him so vindictive, obstinate, and worldly, that the contempt which he inspires often amounts to disgust.

To say how often, and how much, I miss her in whom I live, would be but an ill compliment, when I cannot mention one good that might give value to the preference; but, believe me, greatly as I now feel the loss of my Cecilia, I should be yet more sensible of it, were I surrounded with delight.—Participation is the essence of happiness.

That sweet manner in which you so touchingly correct your own impatience for my return, was not lost upon me.—Happy, happy girls! who find in her who knew not the pleasures to which you owe your being, all that can give value to it! long, long may you repay your *voluntary* mother, as I do, with unremitting love and gratitude!—Yes, allow me to unite those feelings; for love has

ever something selfish and earthly mingled with it; while gratitude is an emanation that exalts us almost beyond mortality, and perpetuates, without the constraint of a vow, the power of the celestial Being who inspires it.—Perhaps I have not expressed myself clearly.—When my heart floats thus in its own fond effusions, I never can consider them into correctness:—wildness must be their merit, as sincerity is their charm.

Love me well enough to be careful of yourself; for my health is in your keeping:—nay, that of a little nameless being, in whom we may both one day with mutual rapture behold ourselves every way united.—This is the only additional delight you can give me on this side heaven.

I mark too the humility of elevating me, by debasing yourself.—Admitting that I had been the means of drawing you into observation, have you not reflected more lustre on my name, than you could ever owe to it?—You, who mix *with*, and

retire *from*, the world, with equal moderation, dignity, and elegance?—who, collected in every emergency, could adorn poverty, and aggrandise misfortune?—But what an endless topic has now run away with my pen?—No, my best-beloved! think not that I have the vanity to attempt comprising in words those merits which, beyond all expression, pass from heart to heart with an intuition, I hope, as familiar to yours as to that of

Your faithful

WESTBURY.

P. S. George has just now shewn me all the letters which he intercepted. I selected one for your perusal, which is original enough. If you cannot decypher it, *cousin Bell* may assist you.

LETTER CXLIX.

TO LADY LISLE.

Bath.

ATER leaffing dere Lunnun, and my amaibel freend, I mai hop to get over anithing :—nott butt I belive this plaice may be tolrábble in time.—Their is a good manny pipple of fashine here, and they all behaves purlitely enuff to me.—Gorge has at last sene a hose, as sutes us ; for most in this town are too smaal for pippel of tone.—I am now on the Sothe Parrade, in Loggins.—It is amosing enuff to sit in a morning, and stody fashines from the windores.—I sea Bos in abondance ; and not contemtibel, howsoever you may fancy.—The Duck of Furnam loggis next hose to us, and is a verry good nibor.—He commenly dinns here every day, and toke me his own self to Simsons Rome, were we opened the Ball together.—He is *my bo*,

plese to tak notis, for Gorge cant abide him : but, enter nose, that is only becasue his Grease is a finer figure of a Man, and the most plesantest cretur in the woorld, you now hoo not excepthed.—One day he would lede me to a peer glass, were he told me I aloane could see my eagle.—I did so color, that he sade my complexshon could nefer be pur natur.—I vented to lett him tri;—I hop it did not cum of—I paid La Brie enuff for it.

I am shure I shall forefer be obligated to my dere Bell, for laffing at my fulish fondnes for my Housebane ; for now we are as coole and as pullite as if we had bene marred a hole centry : and I gets my one wai a grate dele more. Mon dew, what a wulgar cretur was I wen I came out. Not that I repents marring Gorge nither.—Ecod it was the hapeyest day of my hole life, when I krept out of our hall windore. Such wisking abote ever sins.—Such dere sweet close too.—I mite hav bin lokd up at the Hall til I grode as moledy as our grate Cheases, if

your delikusy can look over the shoking caparison.

His Grease of Furnam sais as I have quit the french hair, and it is hapyey for him I nefer gos to Paris; for I shode be adwhored their, and he uxpire unpited. All thes fine complements is onely out of frenchip;—nothink els I ashure you. I lets him be my Gigis Bay, and cam to my twilight. I begin no more to mind puttin on my close before him, then my Made; so I hop by an by F mai cut a figur with you in Paris; tho now I thinks of it, you sai I nefer shall till I gets a tittle. I shood lik to leaf our too mal retches of housebanes to amose eech other. I quit long for a Frolic, and Gorge wont brake his hart, ani more than Sir jon. My cairo sposa has komsoled hisself alreddy. I sees as much as if I was jelus; onely I tak no notis, but to the Duck; and he sais it is shokingly wulgar to be jelus. This is all frenchip;—nothin els I ashure you. Not but Gorge and I have fivety frakaws a day

abote his Grease: but shure I am old enuff to tak care of myself, now I am marred. If he continually gives himself ares, I may be wulgar, and jelus as well, and then wat will Mrs. Gorden sai. So now the sicrets out at last. Shes an Officeers Laddy, and her housebane is in forine parts. Her Ant, I query to be no beter than herself, and sich a panted babby you nefer saw in your borne dais.

Gorge swares Mrs. Gorden is a fineer Woman than me; but the Duck sais no man but hisself cood think so. Oh hes a sweet oblichen cretur, and alwaies keeps me in umor, wen he is with me: and I am somehow noboddy now withote his Grease. Gorge is as busie as a Be, in bespeking fin furnitur, an Mrs. Gorden trots abote all morning with him, wile the Duck heskorts me. If the hose is not reddy for a hole yere, I shall not brake my hart. We meets them at the Millaners at times: for Madam Gorden is always copping my tast; and I thros awai my close wen I sees her in the sam.

She costis me manny a butiful dres, but
Trotman bleses her, I dares to sai.

For hevens sak, my dear Bella, send
me downe sumthing knew. Tell La Brie
I have bene in the sam fashine this 3
wicks, and shall sune gro as antiquated
as my Sister Wesbury. Enter nose, how
goe that pear on. I think she gros
shokingly ornary, and is quit a site,
wen without poder.

The Duck teches me to play, and I
shall pay La brie as sune as I wine ani
munny ; but this littel ridiklus Mrs. Gor-
don maks me lay out a fortin in close at
present. I am in hops noboddy will
troost her sune ; but then I am afeard my
munny pais for her finery too.

Get me a Nitcap of my Sistur Wes-
bury ; it is more pruttiyer than yours.
I shoud be temted to ware mine to the
Romes, if it becomd me as well. Enter
nose, you mai gif a jenny to her Made,
and get on in privat. It mite mak her
vane to be copped in anithing by a
woman of tone lik me, and she nefer

condescends to notis my littel improf-
ments.

Let me no how the Bo mond go on,
and who is dieing for my los. If it ware
not for his Grease, I should be quit a
Mop here, for Gorge is not at ome an
our in a dai. Hi ho ! wat will bekome
of me in our knew hose, when the Duck
is not our nibur, heven nose I shall
uxpire with enknewe, as you calls being
extrem dull.

Happropo, haf you got me a elefer
Frenchwoman? Thers no going on
withote noing sumthing of the langwige;
and I cant bring my mind to larning
odius Grammers. I makes my frishure
tech me a littel evry time he dreses me,
but after al I cant tell wat foulks sai to
me, so I nefer ansers ritely : and then
they spekes so fast; that I nefer have no
patchence, and Gorge does so laff--as if
he was only a lo born retch, and knot a
No Belmans bruther.—Oh he is mity
provokin.

I was forst to hide my pestel, on hear-

ing him ; but for onse I likd his wisit.
 He has just received some of my munny,
 and gav me too undred pound knots.
 I pertly coaxed it out of him by saying
 how butifull his hare was dred. He
 said I was sensable enuff sumtimes, and
 sins the Gurmundgine my father had lef
 his strong bocks behind him, I mite bid,
 my pepel bring there biles, and they
 should be pade. I took the hoppertunite
 and got some reddy munny. Adieu, my
 lofly Bell. Ever your

R. CLIFFORD.

LETTER CL.

TO LORD WESTBURY.

London.

WOULD my Edward have suspected
 that I should shed a flood of tears
 over his last letter ? Yet, how could I
 forbear, when I even found that there
 was such a heart in existence ; and much
 more when I proudly recollect, that

the heart, so beyond all estimation, was devoted to me--me only? I could now, methinks, romantically wish your absence from home prolonged, that I might judge of the pure influence of soul in augmenting tenderness. Yet, what can add to mine? and were you long away, yours would not be tried by all those fond follies which so often prove to me the unalterable sweetness of your temper.

Your account of your brother astonishes me. With so much sense and knowledge, how can he expose himself to the ridicule and obloquy of the world! Nay, have chosen to reside in a place where half the people languish for a tale of slander, and have no other employment than to circulate it! Of Mrs. Clifford I cannot say I hoped any thing better; but I thought that, however deficient in principle, her husband had prudence and pride enough to maintain the decencies of life; and its most exquisite pleasures he had never tasted, consequently could not lose. You too, then, think he loves

my sister? I will not question your judgement; but, believe me, it is not as his brother loves hers. Never would he be alive to the delight of promoting her felicity, if it should not centre in himself. In general society, George's penetration, gaiety, and gallantry, render him very agreeable; but his nature wants all those little refinements, and soft complacencies, which alone can endear us to each other in habitual intercourse. Most sweetly says Dryden—

The being happy is not half the joy:—
The manner of the happiness is all.

With respect to my sex, I doubt that your brother's attachments are very, very sensual; and if he is chiefly struck with sensible women, it is because his vanity demands its indulgence no less than his appetites. Bred up with you, when both had only one kind of view and one condition in life, he, with much regret, saw you take a higher rank, and soon repined at the want of that outward brilliancy.

which he vainly thought your only advantage over him. Thus envy by degrees undermined those principles which fashion had much earlier made him blush at avowing. Introduced by his birth into the *best* company, as the *worst* is too frequently called, he soon became habituated to expensive pleasures, and erased at once from his own heart the very capacity of enjoying a pure one. Pardon my self-love, when I say, that I look upon his passion for me as the last glow of his departing virtue; though even then he was, perhaps, chiefly stimulated by the hope of depriving you of her, whom he too plainly discerned to be the chosen of your heart. His conduct towards me was so generous, in the first instance, that I ought to lose in that recollection all which followed. Me, however, he could not win; and disappointment from that moment completed the ruin of his nature, by adding malice to envy. Believe me, my Lord, if you impartially trace his actions to their source, you will be oblig-

ed to own that the vanity which will prove the destruction of his wife has been alike his bane, although his sex may save him from the same kind of ignominy. I grieve to think that you will never convince him of the existence of a happiness which this world can neither give nor take away ; and if you cannot, who can ?

Is this our north-country lass, with her broad dialect, and awkward gentility ! The most accomplished demirep, who has ran through every London circle, could not exceed her in assurance. Matrimonial happiness is, indeed, at an end, when the husband talks of his *prerogative*, and the wife of her *privileges* : yet, do not the very preliminaries to wedlock in these days imply that the parties expect—nay, almost resolve—to be miserable, and only insist on the reserved right of making each other so ? What a grievous enemy to the good order of society was the man who first invented *marriage articles* ! I heartily hope that he became

the victim to every petty torment which they can inflict.

I have often perceived with surprise that weak and ignorant people are the most obstinate ; whereas, one should expect decision of conduct to spring from reason, duly corrected by knowledge, and a comprehension which took in all probabilities. The errors of ignorance may, however, surely be pardoned, when those who are well informed condescend to be equally faulty ; and, if Mr. Clifford took his wife merely as a convenience, he has no right to punish her for converting him into the same.

Mrs. Trevilian interrupts a letter which I should never think long enough when it is addressed to you. She has got the publication for which we were so impatient, and is come to read it aloud while I work.

I have just heard from Sophia. She seems to console herself in the nursery for those frolics of Sir George, which as much disgrace his years as his under-

standing. How am I continually induced to admire the dispensations of Providence, which allots to so many people the only species of enjoyment they could truly taste ; rendering it complete by implanting at the same time a contempt for all other ! It seems to me astonishing that she can so well love the child, and so little the father : yet God has only given me comprehension to pity in my turn those who do not unite the feelings.

Adieu ! this silent panegyrie on Providence does not greatly delight our impatient friend. She eyes my pen with some spleen. Inaction is a state to which she can never reconcile her tongue ; and I am much deceived if we read more of her book than will serve her lively imagination to work upon.— Ay, go, my sweet girls ! I *will* kiss your papa for you.—The dears are dispatched to their own room, as this must be to the post-office. Ever your own,

CECILIA WESPBURY.

LETTER CLI.

TO LORD WESTBURY.

London, Midnight.

ALAS, my dearest ! in what a consternation do I again address you ! By an express which Mrs. Montague dispatched to *you*, I am informed that Mr. Forrester was yesterday thrown from his horse, and killed upon the spot. Judge how I participate the misery of my Amelia ! On such agonising occurrences our actions alone must speak for us : and, oh ! in what words could I offer consolation, who am so fully convinced that I never could admit of any ?—I fly to sympathise with my darling friend in silence ;—to weep, with true affection, her woes, whose generous tears have so often soothed mine ;—to bring to her arms her poor orphan children ; and, by pre-

senting to those eyes which are now rivetted on one melancholy object, the second dear tie of humanity, melt, if possible, her anguish into words.

I need not intreat your pardon for dispensing with your command on this unforeseen and trying emergency: Heaven would punish so contemptible a consideration as that of my own welfare at such a moment. Surely I shall find the unfortunate widow at Arlington! Mrs. Montague must have fetched her thither. Oh! who could yesterday have suspected the horror in store for us both!

Adieu, my only beloved! I now tremble at your absence, lest I should be dying in you while wholly unconscious of my fate.—Ah! mount not a horse, I entreat.—But why do I increase real evils by dismal chimeras? Can self invade me now?

I have some difficulty, for the first time, to make myself obeyed here.—No matter, man, what horses I have—go I

will ! The moon is just rising—oh ! that I could by its light now press to my bosom the pale face of my Amelia !—but it will give safety to my journey, and tomorrow noon the dear creature will be in the arms of her and your

CECILIA WESTBURY.

LETTER CLII.

TO LADY WESTBURY.

Bath.

I NEED not say how much your last, my Cecilia, shocked and distressed me. Alas ! did I not know that it is Forrester alone whom your Amelia bewails, soon would I restore the tranquillity of your friend ; for never shall the chosen of your heart endure a want while I have a fortune.—But of that hereafter.

I am very much displeased with Mrs. Montague : she knew my anxiety and your condition, and must surely have lost

Her senses to send an express without due caution. Yet who at such a moment could be considerate?

A still more extravagant turn of affairs here, leaves me at liberty to follow my own inclinations. Need I say, that the chaise is preparing to bring me home? — You see at your instance I forbear to ride; if I command, I know too how to obey. I am in great alarm for you, and not less affliction for your friend: but as in some moments a generous nature risks even existence without a thought of self, I cannot blame the precipitation which actuated your journey, though I tremble for its consequences. Send the bearer back immediately, if you can comfort me with the news that you are not a sufferer: — a moment of severe anxiety is worth saving, and these are the most pardonable prodigalities of the rich.

I shall be in your arms almost as soon as you have ran over my letter, and write only to avoid surprising you. I

take upon myself the interment of Mr. Forrester.—Shall wealthy vice summon half a million to a funeral, and humble virtue steal unnoticed to the grave?—It ought not for the sake of example. I will do the excellent man justice—I would do him honour, but he has not left that in my power. Adieu! say all for me to the interesting mourner that your own heart dictates; for is not mine its counterpart?

WESTBURY.

LETTER CLII.

TO LADY HARINGTON.

Arlington.

ALAS, my dear Sophia! think not of *my* health, *my* welfare.—I have not a word, a thought for myself—Amelia, my unfortunate Amelia, occupies my whole attention. It is impossible to give you a clearer account of the accident than you have read in the papers. The pious

Forrester, ever assiduous in his duty, had been summoned to the deathbed of a distant farmer; alas! one further, as it appears, from the grave than himself. Whether a vertigo seized him, or the horse started, cannot be ascertained, as he went out alone: but the poor animal was found standing in the road-way near his master.—A fatal blow on his temple from the stone it fell on, ended his life instantaneously:—he knew neither pain nor sorrow. Oh! judge what a fond wife must feel, when the man whom she saw ride from his own door in high health one hour before, was brought home a corpse upon a hurdle! Surrounded as Amelia now is by every thing and person that can alleviate her woe, it will nevertheless be long before time can have power over a misery like hers. I cannot resolve even to attempt consoling her. I sometimes collect in her absence those high arguments which alone can be opposed to human affliction, yet no sooner do I behold my Amelia, than the silent

sense of irremediable calamity, expressed on her pale countenance, puts reason to flight; and all the pious ideas which I have been arranging, melt in a flood of unavailing tears. We sit together whole days, with little more intercourse than the exchange of affectionately mournful looks. I can perceive that my society, once the joy of her life, only adds to her oppression at present: nevertheless, it is necessary even to force it upon her, as it will dispose her mind hereafter to return to her duties, and the habits of her life.

My Lord interred Mr. Forrester in a manner more suitable to his own rank than that of the good man; and attended him to the vault of the Cliffords in person. The concourse of people this funeral, together with the accident, drew hither, was astonishing. Mr. Forrester had professionally a boundless influence among his parishioners - precept from him came enforced by example; and his virtues were the more meritorious as he

was remarkably handsome, and in the very bloom of life. A clergyman of unblemished character, and a benevolent mind, still retains in the country a respect and authority almost unlimited : and however happy Lord Westbury may be in the choice of the next incumbent, the one who has been thus suddenly snatched away, will long be remembered with regret. Never shall I see his equal! Who was ever so learned without pedantry !—so beneficent without ostentation ! You felt that the pure spirit of belief dictated every word he uttered ; and in his manner there was ever a noble consciousness of fulfilling his duty. His devotion was simple, yet sublime ; affecting rather than enthusiastic. Choice had led him to the altar, and habit only made him find in its awful duties a holy tranquillity. In a word, he *was* a clergyman ;—a blessing among his fellow-creatures, and a glory to the celestial beings with whom he now is joined. Mr. Forrester was a stranger to you, or I might have spared

this tribute to a heart which ever obtained admiration from all who approached it.

My Amelia has two sweet fatherless children, to both of whom I am godmother. Charles is five years old, and her Cecilia yet at her bosom.—Dear sister of my heart! find with me society and comfort; for surely the children whom I have adopted will never want protection, while Lord Westbury survives: this alone supports even me under the calamity. No, my Amelia, nothing now but death shall part us. May I want a home if ever I forget how gladly you would have shared an humble one with me; and still bewailed those sorrows from which you could not save me! Poor must ever be my acknowledgements who had not the start in generosity.

Ah! what indeed but death can ever extinguish those first emotions; I might perhaps say breathings, of our youthful hearts which lead them to each other! affections which, being scarcely at first above instinct, so soon acquire the strength and

dignity of reason! A generous emulation united her feelings with mine, as it shall our fates. We delighted to improve, that we might become worthy of, each other; and, tutored by parents both capable and willing, I may with self-applause say, that we *did* improve; nor ever gave those to whose care and tenderness we owed so much, one hour of wilful anguish. The prospects of my Amelia seemed to open at the crisis when mine began to close. She married, and duty sanctified her choice: peace dwelt in her habitation till this dire event: but has not such a lot doubled the horror of her loss?—Oh, my Amelia! it is impossible to think of consoling you.

Certain that I have not equally deserved to be happy, hardly can I persuade myself that I shall long continue so; and I behold my Lord whenever he returns, even from the shortest absence, with a trembling tearful kind of delight, as if I had not expected again to see him. Time will, however, wear off the

impression, and I owe it to him to strengthen my mind.

I am perplexed between different duties. Sir George, I suppose, attends the late call of the house. My Lord says that *he* must; yet neither can I leave Mrs. Forrester, nor, thus situated, propose to her going with me. The tenderness of my beloved makes me dread intimating a wish to be left behind him.— Besides, can I wish it? I must be a wretch if I did. With a true female caprice, I would *only* have the parliament prorogued, and let the nation be ruined, rather than subject myself to inconvenience.

I have had little time, and less inclination, to enquire into the Bath adventure, of which we all saw too much in the papers. That I might answer you rightly, I however questioned my Lord, who says, that Mrs. Clifford sure enough eloped with the very valet who guarded her apartments—(a wise scheme it was, to make a gay young fellow her gaoler!)

--carrying away her clothes, jewels, and ornaments; all except her husband's picture, to which, with unparalleled effrontery, she by some means got that ornament added, with which, it is no longer doubted, that she had embellished his brows. This ridiculous insolence equally diverts the wits and the fools. The plan was laid so adroitly, that the lady was not missed till the following day, when the decorated picture was found on her dressing-table. George stormed finely.—My Lord had just then received my summons, and left his brother to follow me.—Mrs. Clifford was traced by her enraged husband to London; but some days passed before he could discover her home, or her intentions.—Spies, from Doctors Commons let him into both; and he there learnt, that, as she could ascertain ill-usage, she was very likely to carry her point of a separate maintenance, unless he could prove the worst of all facts on her.—George lost no time, and, by enormous bribes, bought the people where she

lodged. It is with shame I add, that the unhappy Mrs. Clifford was detected criminally with the abettor of her flight. As it was not the interest of George to divorce her, he suffered the valet to fly, and seized only the lady, whom, by his authority, he now can immure on her own estate, whither she has been conveyed by his servants. The few relations whom she has surviving, heard of her conduct with horror, and have shut their doors for ever against her. Mr. Clifford has thus, you perceive, rejected the wife, yet contrived to keep the fortune. From the hour of her flight, Lord Westbury gave up all interference; nevertheless, upon the proof of her guilt, he judged it due to the honour of the family to have her watched, till it be known whether she is likely to perpetuate her shame; as in that case she must be divorced, or the child perhaps inherit (should I not be happy enough to bring my Lord an heir) all the titles, estates, and honours, of the house of Clifford. Should she have

escaped perpetuating her ignominy, this weak, guilty, vain woman, must linger out her whole youth, at the option of a husband who despises her, and far from the gay scenes which seduced her from virtue.

I may not be exact in my detail, for the confusion of reports is incredible. All turn, however, against Mrs. Clifford, who is represented to have a much greater share of wit and assurance than I think she ever possessed. Thus ends *a modern marriage*.

I do not imagine that Mr. Clifford's conduct will win Marianne's heart; though I am not sure she did not first inspire him with the design of getting rid of his wife. Unluckily, on recollection, however, he discovered, that although he could well spare the lady, he had many uses for her fortune: nor could even love render him blind to his interest.

If Captain Percival is returned, have the goodness to insinuate my regret that he should have visited London while my

Lord was absent, who would not have allowed him to live in a lodging. I could not reconcile my mind to inviting him into the house, while I was its sole inhabitant. I thought him both spiritless and thin. You take no care of him among you.—This boy, this boy, is the universal concern. I hate the ungrateful feminine custom of bestowing every tenderness on the object least sensible of any. Nature strengthens that tie sufficiently; let reason be exerted to strengthen every other.—My Lord bids me enquire if Marianne means to immure herself the whole year in the country; and adds, saucily enough, that if she does, he shall know where to direct to Percival.

Our journey to town is now arranged as a relation of Mrs. Forrester's has offered to come and pass the interval with her. Mrs. Mentague, too, is very tender and assiduous. For two months, therefore, we shall be in London; though, if you will direct your coachman thither, instead

of a letter, it would be a great kindness. I am half tempted to think that my Lord hurries me hence, lest I should suffer by too intent a sympathy--But have I a right to question so kind a motive, or indeed to put any thing in competition with a circumstance so important to his happiness as my going on well in my present condition?

Mrs. Forrester feels all the gratitude she ought for your truly affectionate epistle. Accept, through me, her tearful answer. Yours ever,

CECILIA WESTBURY.

LETTER CLIII.

TO LADY HARINGTON.

London.

YES, my dear, I plead guilty. You have heard the truth. I, who once wished to steal through the world unno-

ticed and unknown (though, entre nous, that was but a refinement of my pride, which could not support being known and under-valued), now dare to draw a line of conduct for myself, and even to be singular. Yet, believe me, it is only by making my conscience the rule of my conduct. A happy fortune has placed me in a point of view where I cannot be unnoticed: and it becomes me well to weigh those actions which may lead many on whom my example may operate, wrong or right.

But I was still more, perhaps, governed by a tender consideration :—the making him happy who has made me so. Not merely by avowals of attachment, or professions of submission; but by a natural and easy conformity to his modes of acting and thinking. This cost me no sacrifice, for my soul was in his hand, ready to take whatever form he chose to give it. I recollect in time that Lord Westbury's modes and opinions were in many respects as unfixed as my own, and I

sought insensibly to guide him to what I thought would make him eventually happy as well as wise. With a taste for study, he had plunged into dissipation, after which it must be difficult to prevent regularity of life from appearing dull. I found it, however, not a painful effort to avow my ignorance in many principles of taste, many improvements in science; nor to declare how willing I should be to avail myself of his superior information. Pleased to impart knowledge, Lord Westbury insensibly finds his taste for increasing his own revive. We are both amused in these kind of pursuits, and they have gradually introduced us to the retired, the wise, and the good. I do not, on further acquaintance, appear so ignorant but that men of letters take some pleasure in my company; and the deference which I shew to them renders the house of Lord Westbury often visited by those persons whom all desire to know, though few take the trouble to cherish. I make it, however, a point never to introduce a

man or woman of genius, but to such as will assimilate at once with them ; for nature has gifted—I might rather, perhaps, say *punished*—such persons with a delicacy of feeling that renders a cold observation of them an insupportable mortification.

I have a further satisfaction in the society and the knowledge I gather from persons of talent, when I recollect how great will be the pleasure of imparting what I learn. I have already two sweet children to form for “many-colour’d life,” and in time may have more. How respectable shall I become to their dear father, when he finds that those lighter hours, which many wives devote to a weak fondness, have been spent by me in preparing my mind for the graver duties of parental tenderness !—since, alas ! those years will come to the thoughtful and the thoughtless alike.

Beside, in my present situation, exercise is necessary ; and indolent contemplation ought to be avoided, lest it

lead to melancholy. As I before visited museums, and meditated upon the animal world; I now have taken to considering the vegetable one. We botanise every morning at Chelsea, after taking an airing; at least, my Lord meets me there, and the plants, of which I obtain specimens, frequently supply the philosophers to whom our table is open, with subjects of conversation, from which I glean piety, virtue, and knowledge. Ah, my dear! those who have the forbearance to deny themselves superfluous horses, carriages, and diamonds, may reserve, without adding to their expences, the sublime pleasure of befriending genius, and storing up information. Can I envy the gay young women of fashion whom I meet exhibiting their splendid equipages in Hyde-Park, when I so often behold the pale sons of science to whom Lord Westbury's patronage is distinction;—to whom my smile is felicity, and to whom our moderately-served table is voluptuousness? As I seek with unwearied assiduity

people of real merit, so do I shun most decidedly those of mere pretension. It is not so difficult to separate them as you imagine. There is a free-masonry in mind, and when the sign is not answered, it is easy to know a false brother.

Yet do not from this account think that I affectedly banish my own sex from the house, or withdraw from those pleasures in which ladies can take part. It is certain that I never play cards; but on the nights when I think it due to Lord Westbury's rank that I should hold an assembly, one of our larger rooms is prepared for play, and the groom attends. The parties form of persons already acquainted; but I will not license high play: nor do I from the moment they sit down to cards ever enter that room. Having thus, in my own opinion, found the easy art of sifting the ore from the dross, I am perhaps gradually losing exactly that number of my acquaintance whom I would not wish to retain.

You have heard me ridiculed. You

have been told that I am precise as a methodist. Who told you so, my dear ? —Not your mother. I am as much too gay in her eyes, as too grave in those of your other acquaintance. You cannot but know that, when unchecked by misfortune, I have spirits beyond my constitution. How should I lose them now then, when the accomplishment of my wishes awakens the desire to please ; and that desire, we well know, ever adds to the power. My wardrobe, you may remember, was always proportioned to my circumstances, and to their extent. I still follow the same rule, though not with the same economy : and if I dress with expensive elegance during the few months which we pass in town, I feel justified in doing so by two considerations : —first, because it pleases my husband ; and next, that the world, which can only judge from appearances, may observe that he respects me not less than if I had brought him a fortune. Virtue gives up too many charms to vice if she renounces

dress, amusements, and that innocent gaiety which is surely her own peculiar privilege, if not attribute. None of these are censurable till the single object is torn from the heart, and we condescend to live for the multitude. She who seeks éclat from such a motive, is but a kind of prostitute, who is saved from being grossly so merely by self-love.

I do not affect to reform the beau monde, but I disdain being the slave of custom, in a situation which intitles me to think and act for myself. Play is almost a vice at present :—it levels understandings;—annihilates time;—and impoverishes, not only the present generation, but many yet to come. Let those whose weak intellects, or bounded information, oblige them to resort to this resource, term it an amusement ; but let persons who can add the pleasures of imagination to the energetic charm of reason, fill up their lives with a series of such delights as may extract the sting from death itself,

Marianne will tell you that this conduct is in me conviction ; for, when a girl, I loved cards. Alas ! a vain heart may be piqued into loving any thing ; and I have not vanity enough to say, that I am without the foible. As I grew up, I had time to consider--nay, to see--their pernicious tendency ; as well as to observe how totally they levelled characters and capacities : from whence a dislike to them rooted itself in my nature, which time will never cure. Even at the moment when my aversion to cards creates me so many enemies, I never refuse to play in any house but my own ; since in that alone am I bound conscientiously to consider the force of example. It is true I allow myself a certain sum, with which I may, without great impropriety, compliment my company ; and, if I am fortunate enough to win, I add the overplus to my purse for charity : thus can cards only excite in me a laudable avarice. Indeed, I have seen some people who are half

mad, and others who are half fools, so often possessed of this accomplishment, that I am tempted to conclude excellence in it rather the mark of a vacant than an informed mind.

This then is "*the pedantic superiority I affect over my sex.*" Ah! how unjust is the imputation!—could I but tolerate absurdity, I should never be so accused. They say that I would be *a Marchioness de Lambert*. How honoured should I think myself if any affinity can be found between her character and mine, and what must I not owe to those who discovered it!

Music forms at once a part of my own delight, and the amusement of my company:—till the hour appointed for that, those who come to this house for any other reason than to shew their fine clothes, or empty the purses of their neighbours, join me in the larger 'drawing room.'—This circle is chiefly composed of the young and the gay, among whom Mrs. Trevilian and Lord Westbury are formed to shine. When chance or choice

brings to us men of a higher cast of mind, serious conversation will necessarily arise ; but much oftener we have sprightly sallies of wit, and accidental strains of music, with all the variety of character which the world would not fail to afford us, did we not confine its sportive sallies between a triple range of card tables : here hearts have a chance of being stolen through the ear, instead of constantly making their escape through the eyes.

I have always held in abhorrence that custom of France, which restricts women before marriage, and leaves them a boundless freedom after. No, let the reverse prevail in England, and self-restraint prove the *consequence*, and not the *cause*, of wedlock. Every mind would then freely unfold itself, and lovers unite with that thorough knowledge of each other which alone can render matrimony happiness. Were this mode of associating general, it would not perhaps cure either sex of a taste for gaming, but it would cer-

tainly prevent either from thinking of it in the presence of the other.

Assure yourself that I speak and act from my own judgement; yet had my Lord another, I should be governed by it. The moment the wish of pleasing is lost in a wife, her power begins to decay. Oh! let me cherish then the first for the sake of the amiable man who has given me the last!--and that I may do so, I will not grudge to my little circle a share of that animated politeness which he eminently possesses, and which is not only the most exquisite charm in society, but the only one that can prolong happiness in a more tender union.

Man, born for action, seems to require it in every pleasure:--each must in a slight degree become a pursuit before it can rise to a gratification. Women, who are destined to hold only the second rank in nature, to follow not to lead, find in softness at once their merit and enjoyment; insomuch that tears are often both an or-

nament to them, and an indulgence.—Love, however, can adapt us to ~~any~~ thing, and convert obedience into triumph. How many of the weakest has it nerved! —How many of the proudest has it subdued! This recollection alone would induce me to sacrifice my own taste, and follow Lord Westbury in pursuits analogous to his; in the humble hope that mine might in turn have a charm for him.

Detraction tells you how I have succeeded: it treats him as a weak man governed wholly by a blind and extravagant passion. Cruel, injurious aspersion!—How many of his sex, disdaining censures which they ought rather to have laughed at, daily become tyrants to avoid being thought slaves! It is thus that matrimonial happiness is perpetually invaded by those who have not any to lose; and the attacks are so various, that they can hardly fail of some success.

Your character of Marianne's lover, my dear, is very partial; *good-nature* is surely a kind of constitutional virtue,

and riches merely an accidental merit : yet nothing more can I discern in him. His so plainly offering to buy her, by an immense jointure, shews that he knows himself not to be worthy her heart ; and I should have been sorry to find *that* to have been within reach of a bribe.

No, let the vanity of ambition be wholly extinct in every woman acquainted with the woes which it brings upon the Duchess of Fernham.—Ah ! how is that sweet creature persecuted ! Had she brought a son instead of a daughter into the world, she might have been suffered perhaps to live apart from the Duke, who continues to sue importunately for a reunion ; but as her father and mother find that they must still languish for an heir, they are impatient to win their daughter to forgiveness, although every slight has been shewn *to*, and every mark of aversion returned *by*, her. While she was advancing in her pregnancy, all this was allowed for ; but *now* it is termed a childish folly, and a weakness of temper

which it would reflect on her friends to authorise. While scarce ascertained of existence, the interesting, unfortunate Diana, has been lectured by all the antiques of her family. She has passed those days in tears, repinings, and every apprehension which the whole sex find sacred to silence and repose : till at length her parents completed their selfish obstinacy, by conducting the Duke into her dressing-room on the day she first was visible. Shocked and distressed at such an unwished and unexpected visitor, she was seized with a miliary fever of the most dangerous kind. During the period when Lord and Lady Winchester were alarmed for the life of the Duchess, they again were governed by reason, nor once mentioned a wish which might retard her recovery. Yet whenever that is completed, Lady Lisle tells me, the persecution will be renewed. Mrs. Trevilian, against whom the parents have shut their doors, as a malicious incendiary, who magnified little offences into unpardonable injuries,

is highly exasperated. She thinks the worst, and utters all she thinks: insisting that the Duchess will not survive this treatment long; and that her husband and parents will be as accountable for her death as though they had levelled a pistol at her heart. Mrs. Trevilian adds, that were she the Duchess, she would soon find a protector. Alas! the gentle Diana dares not even think of this. I often grudge to myself that happiness which I seem to have snatched from her.

The Duchess no sooner was able to receive any visitor, than she enquired for Mrs. Trevilian; and, on hearing how that lady had been affronted, sent her maid to inform her angry friend that she reckoned the being robbed of her company among her numberless sorrows: nor can they at present hold any other intercourse. As Mrs. Trevilian does me the justice to believe that the tenderest compassion alone excites my curiosity, she generally

hastens to me with whatever intelligence she gains. She was here just now, and informs me that she is assured the Duke means, with the concurrence of her parents, to reduce his wife to obedience, by demanding the child; and this it seems the law allows. Had the babe been illegitimate, it would have been wholly her own, nor could the father have torn it from her. After this, she is to be carried to Bromley Grove, where she will find both the child and her husband, to whom her parents there mean to deliver her. Those very parents who fostered this *only*, this unfortunate daughter, with an unlimited indulgence--insomuch, that the world thought their hearts to have been wrapt in her--now inexorably sacrifice her to their parchment hopes!--their parchment honours! These worldly impenetrable beings deliberately surrender the helpless lovely sufferer to the worst of fates, only to perpetuate the peerage of Winchester! The sole distinction which I can make between such

people and the inhabitants of Bedlam, is, that *these* know the consequences of their insanity, which, in ceasing to be a misfortune, becomes a crime. I can scarcely forbear anonymously expostulating with them on the enormity of their conduct: but I fear lest they should ascribe such an address to my Lord, rather than to your

CECILIA WESTBURY.

LETTER CLIV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

ONE smile I demand of my Amelia --nor will I dispense with it. Nay, I think it impossible that she should withhold one, when she hears the occasion.

I went last night to the Pantheon, with my usual party, Lady Harington, Mrs. Trevilian, and her young new-married sister, Lady Browne, the Duke of

H—, Lord Edward, *my* Lord, and several other beaus. As the business of the matrons was to do honour to the bride, we were all elegantly drest. When we had almost drank our tea, Trevilian stooped, and whispered me—"However slightly you always speak of your own charms, they have indisputably made a conquest of your neighbour." I looked around with a gay air, and suddenly fixed my eyes upon the whole family of the Bayntuns. Theirs were on the full stretch of observation. A sweet recollection that in their company I had first seen Lord Westbury, endeared the otherwise unpleasant set to me; and I only waited till I could conveniently rise to greet them. They continued to watch us; but a little accident which endangered a child near me, withdrew my attention: and, on looking for the party, I found that they had quitted the table. Lord Westbury enquired who my eyes so eagerly sought, and on my naming the Bayntuns, his memory recalling them

with the same pleasure, he promised to look out for the party. I suddenly felt indisposed, as just now I often am in public places, and wished to get away before the rest of the company. My Lord hastened on, to order the carriage to be called, and the Duke gave me his hand. In the lobby, as waiting for theirs, stood the rascals of the Bayntuns; who again fixed their goggle eyes full on me. I advanced to Mrs. Bayntun, and would have taken her hand, with the air of smiling friendship;—but, stepping back with a look of insolent contempt, she surveyed me from head to foot, and turned her back in silence. The Duke, as he well might, stood astonished; when, at once, the cry that Lady Westbury's carriage stopt the way, a second time electrified my former friends. Before they could recover their surprise, my Lord came back, and, drawing my arm under his, said, "Make haste, my love, or your carriage must draw off." I should not be amazed to hear that my quondam

patronising friends were rootbound in that very lobby at this moment.—I had got thus far in my epistle, when the servants brought me up the tickets left this morning, and among them Mrs. Bayntun's; but my Lord will not now hear of my making her my acquaintance, and had luckily sent orders to the porter not to admit her.

It is thus that the revolutions of fortune sometimes rectify the ideas of the arrogant. Had Mrs. Bayntun known how to be properly civil to Miss Rivers, she would never have been thrown at the mortifying distance she now is by Lord Westbury's wife. From this moment, she will become, I doubt not, duly guarded, and pass for a prudent, good-natured, obliging kind of person.

* * * * *

I have just learnt, with real delight, that the Duchess of Fernham has finally extricated herself from the odious predicament in which she stood; and know that it will rejoice your good heart to be

told in what way she has secured tranquillity to herself, though not happiness. Lady Harington and Lady Lisle, who were both witnesses of the scene, have given me so full an account, that I shall venture to transcribe it.

Mrs. Trevilian, as I have reason to suppose, secretly apprised the Duchess of the plans concerted to reduce her to obedience; and, perhaps, counselled her to affect to listen with more composure to her parents, on the subject of a reconciliation with her husband. I do not find that she more than suffered them to delude themselves, but when obliged to consent to an interview with him, she insisted that the atonement should be as public as the affront; and in the presence alike of all *his* relations, and *hers*, as well as of the mutual friends, in whose opinion she wished to stand acquitted. Well knowing the sweetness of her disposition, this apparent submission to the will of her parents they interpreted into a triumph. They flattered the Duke into the same

belief, who acceded to whatever she desired, in the hope of regaining the lovely wife whom he had so unjustifiably insulted.

The appointed day of course convened a large and splendid company, who had already overwhelmed the Duke with congratulations on the reconciliation, when the Duchess was led in by her mother. She checked the embrace which her husband would have given her, by a cold and solemn courtesy ; kissing only her hand therefore, the Duke sat down by her.—This chilling outset threw the whole company into a surprise, which caused an impatient silence. After leaning a few moments irresolutely on her mother's bosom, the sweet Diana addressed her tyrant :—“ When last I saw you at York——.”—“ Forget that unhappy moment, Madam,” cried he, “ or think me punished enough for my error.”—“ Your Grace must pardon me ; the reference is indispensably necessary to what I would further say.—You there

consented that an eternal separation should take place between us."—"In a moment of passion," he returned, "I did weakly consent to give up a blessing, of which I now better know the value."—"Why, then," cried she, rising and surveying him indignantly, "have you revoked your declaration?—If the imputation you there threw upon my character was true, I am unworthy of you;—if false, you are unworthy of me.—Any way, it surely ought to separate for ever those minds which never were matched. This large circle of our mutual relatives and friends were assembled at my own request, upon a memorable and singular occasion. Happy that a guiltless heart enables me thus to face God, and this good company, I will not be denied the privilege of a common criminal—a candid hearing;—at least a hearing. Had I always known as well how to conduct myself, this astonished company had never been called together as my judges. To you, my Lord, and Madam," address-

ing her father and mother, " my own soul tells me that I have done my duty, even to the extent, or this trial would never have happened.—To the Duke, on the contrary, I should owe a concession, had I ever deceived him; but he well knew that at the very moment when I allowed my father to give my hand into his, I sacrificed my inclinations to my duty ;—a duty which I never for one hour violated. Fain would I have esteemed the man whom I could not love, but he would not let me. To such a husband I am told the *law* will give me for life, if he dare to execute its vengeance. But will he add shame, perhaps, to sorrow ? —will he drive me to absolute despair ? for, in the presence of God, and the friends gathered around us, I swear that one roof shall never, with my consent, shelter both. Let me then, my Lord, appeal to your humanity ;—nay, to your very pride. Why will you distress a wretch whom you can never render happy ? Already have you seen the conse-

quence of terror on my constitution ; nor will you perhaps be acquitted, in the sight of God, if my days should be shortened, even by natural means. Allow me to owe existence to your compassion. Leave me to penury, reproach, neglect, so you do but leave me. To compensate for the loss of your liberty, since the law will not allow of its restoration but by a conduct disgraceful on my part, accept that fortune which my parents have hitherto reserved for me.— Gladly will I resign every thing in this world to you, *but myself.*"—Having thus concluded, drowned in tears, and in the humblest attitude of supplication, the Duchess sunk before her harsh, her odious husband ; who justified all her aversion by his conduct. Enraged to find himself thus over-reached and exposed, he gave way at once to his narrow-hearted virulence ; treating her father, mother, and self, with equal contempt and asperity : yet solemnly vowed she should go home that moment

with him, though she were to die in the coach. Nor did he spare her delicacy with respect to Lord Westbury, who will never, I hope, learn how free the Duke made with his character. He was preparing to execute his threat of taking her home with him, when it was discovered that the sad sufferer was totally lifeless; and as the whole party interferred to save her, he could not carry his selfish design into execution: he therefore quitted Lord Winchester's house in a fit of rage, taking with him, however, his infant daughter, despite of all which the old Countess could urge, or the prayers of the female part of the company. That resentment which all the Duke's ill-treatment of their daughter had failed to awaken in Lord and Lady Winchester, sprung up at the least personal insult. They now vehemently adopt the resolutions of the sweet Diana, and swear that her tyrant never more shall have the power of tormenting her.

A few days convinced the enraged

Duke, that, to persecute his wife further, would load him with opprobrium, law-suits, and duels; he has therefore finally consented to an eternal separation: and, to regain the infant, for whom the tender mother incessantly pined, Lord Winchester has been obliged to perpetuate his estates to the young Diana and her issue; thus excluding his daughter, should she outlive the Duke, from her own inheritance, or the power of bestowing any thing on another husband or children.

The amiable victim of her father's pride is now become one to her own prudence; and returns to her paternal home, as to a miserable asylum from an insupportable husband and all illicit attacks. She means, I find, to fix her residence at Bromley Grove, till her daughter reaches an age to require masters.

When Lord and Lady Winchester rejoin, in total seclusion, their lovely daughter, whom they proudly considered as born to embellish society;—when they see her

bloom blighted by her own tears, and her heart bursting with griefs, which speech would but aggravate ;—what can they say to her, or each other ? Ah ! how gained they courage to usurp so barbarous an authority ?—only because, by an ordination in which she had no share, she came into the world but as the vehicle of their vanity !

Women in general are more exposed to be miserable than men ; and heiresses are generally victims to their own advantages. It is the interest of the persons around them to veil their purposes ; and few give up interest for principle. Sacrificed either by their parents' ill-judged choice, or their own, they too frequently sink into an early grave, beneath the double weight of affliction and diamonds.

The secret service by which Sir George Clifford obtained that title, has not yet reached my ear ; therefore I cannot satisfy your curiosity : but even with this new honour, and all his adroitness, he is neither rich nor happy. His patriotism, you

may be assured, is merely a struggle for popularity. A real patriot will first be just to every inferior duty, and a thoroughly good man. Seldom, however, is a good man a great one: for he naturally despairs the little artifices on which popularity is founded. Those human meteors who fix the admiration of the multitude are often, I grant, useful evils; but if they only benefit their country as the means of aggrandising themselves, I cannot think that we are greatly indebted to them for so accidental a service. Men of that description leave even the strictly moral a right at once to use and to despise them.

Poor Lady Clifford (for so I must henceforward term my weak sister-in-law) will feel this as an aggravation of her vexations; for never human being would more have enjoyed the world, her new title, and eclat. Besides, it would have levelled her with her model, Lady Lisle. Now an awkward *my Lady* from her servants, and a formal one from the

rector of a sunday, are all the advantages which a title can bring her. Her only concerts are now in the grove; her only companions, God and her own conscience; her only hope, repentance.—How strange it is that those most accustomed to the pleasures of nature, least know how to value them; and that refinement alone seems to restore our taste for simplicity! We are going to try the experiment on Lady Lisle, who submits to a kind of necessary exile in accompanying us to Arlington only because she wants means to stay in town. My Lord and Mr. Trevilian have promised to see Sir John's affairs arranged; hoping yet to save something from the wreck of his fortune. Our busy Baronet, Sir George Clifford, undertakes, I hear, to get his cousin a place; but I am not quite persuaded that he has interest enough at once to serve Lisle and himself. Alas! how difficult a lesson is economy, when once people have been accustomed to extravagance! The Lisles

have precipitated their ruin in mere despair : and as they were able only to spend upon credit, they heeded not the price of any purchase. A lavish turn for play has, I doubt, impoverished them beyond redemption ; but I will hope the best, and only wish it were possible to persuade the thoughtless pair that happiness may be found out of the metropolis. I see, with pain, such is the force of habit, that I cannot appear in a new dress without making this poor woman absolutely wretched ; and I must wear only old clothes to keep her either in good health or good humour. Sir John, too, will lead the ton, and speaks of his birth-day suit and new equipage with singular satisfaction, though we know that he has an execution at this moment in his house, and not a guinea in his purse. To prevent this egregious folly, my Lord means to remain awhile in London himself; but to send me, with his cousins, to Arlington next week.

Alas, my dear ! I fear that these

people will break in on you, and rob us of our sad society in grief: but my Lord says, that we must not indulge it so much—And has he not a right to guide in all things your

CECILIA WESTBURY ?

LETTER CLV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Arlington Court.

I KNOW full well, my Amelia, the scene here is too gay for your feelings; but, surely, in mine you could always find a heart exquisitely alive to them. Ah ! why then leave me ? Mrs. Trevilian means to go to Paris, and talks of quitting us to-morrow. Lady Lisle—is she not tedious and insipid ?—a mere vehicle of fashion ; and, out of the beau monde, a creature without an existence. How many social domestic transports

has she already robbed me of? for the coldness of her heart checks the warmth of mine, by seeming constantly to demand a reason for it; and while I ask the question, the golden moment of gaiety and enjoyment elapses. Without adding by my company aught to her happiness, I find that she very sensibly diminishes mine.

Amelia, my eyes have, I fear, too often asked yours the question which, after many struggles with myself, I at last venture:—Ah! tell me what you think of her eternal trifling with my Lord? Not that I can believe myself capricious or jealous. It is not him—Heaven forbid that it should!—whom I doubt. Yet, perhaps, I think Lord Westbury might recollect how utterly my present situation precludes my being of these playful parties: and ought it not then indirectly to check them? Why, why did my vanity, under the veil of benevolence, impel me to attempt guiding this light woman to reason, virtue, and happiness?—rather than toil to obtain her own portion, she will, I

fear, take the shorter method of invading mine. Long, long insured to the apprehension of losing him whom I found it so hard to gain, that dread can never be totally extinct in my bosom. The sense of my present helplessness, too, affects me still more, by reminding me that I am now rather the object of compassion than love. If I should be so *indeed!*—but let me not conjure up so fearful an idea.—Lord Westbury's integrity shall be my security, and I will think my own heart culpable if it refuses to confide in him. But these Lisles are alike born to torment me: and it is with more reluctance still that I unfold to you my second cause of displeasure.—Sir John, vain, insolent, unprincipled, supposes, I imagine, that those faults will be recommendations to me. I have at various times suspected him of foolish gallantry, but thought it beneath my notice. As I became assured that he pressed my hand yesterday in leading me down the flight of steps, I snatched it from him haughtily enough; nor recol-

lected, till too late, that my Lord might observe him. The coldness of my words and looks during the whole evening a little disconcerted him, and but a little: however, he acted the penitent. Having had leisure to consider the future, I met his eyes this morning with all the firmness due to my own character; and, despite of his assurance, extorted the blush from the right person.

Were you here I need never be a moment without you. I always, you know, disapproved the present method of associating, especially in the country. Married women were never more chaste, happy, and distinguished, than when surrounded either by their husbands, children, or servants—it was impossible for any libertine to find them alone. I would have every man as delicate as Cæsar; and these habits secure us from suspicion, as well as insult. Single women are accountable only to God and their own hearts, and may reasonably allow their lover and themselves interviews, to cherish hope,

and form systems of happiness. But when once a woman is married, she adds dignity, or ought to add it, to all her other charms. In those intervals which she passes not in her own apartment, or general society, she might work in the room with her maids; and if this kind of conduct is not necessary to her fortune, let her believe it to be so to her felicity. Idleness is the evil of the great, and not less destructive to their morals than to their peace.

Can I fail to think thus with Lady Lisle continually before me?—She does not read, lest she should injure the lustre of her eyes; nor work, lest she harden her delicate hands: and she lives in continual terror of our sweet children's infantine caresses, lest the minute elegances of her dress should suffer. Does she not seem born only to be looked at?—as useless as the flowers in her bosom, and much less lovely. The original at this moment takes me from the portrait, and, perhaps, in good time; for, though

speaking only truth, I may use terms too severe.

Oh, Amelia! correct the ardours of a heart which long habit renders but too susceptible of anxiety.

LETTER CLVI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Arlington Court.

OH, my dear Amelia! where are you?—While you were with me, like my guardian angel, you sheltered me at once from sorrow and from insult: but now—though quite, as I thought, cautious enough—art on his side, and accident on mine, have given this licentious Sir John an opportunity of distressing and alarming me.

Our visitors all went abroad early this morning; but I was not well enough to rise to breakfast. When, however, I

threw open my windows, and saw the beauty of the day, I resolved to indulge myself in a solitary walk through the gardens, to observe how some improvements, where the new ha-ha seems to join them to the park, went on.—The children, unluckily, were all out, or your son would, as usual, have been at my elbow:—dear little fellow! The dewy sweetness of the shrubbery was exquisite. I gathered a cluster of roses, which their own richness had bent to the ground; and retreated to the open Chinese pavilion, to fix them in my bosom. I had been either lost in thought, or my hearing engrossed by the rushing water near me; for I found Sir John Lisle just at my elbow, without knowing how he came there.

“ To find your Ladyship alone,” said he, with a perturbation that a little startled me, “ is a happiness as rare as unexpected.”

“ I thought, Sir John,” returned I, in a fluttered tone, “ you rode out with the gay party this morning.”

"Gay parties, Lady Westbury, require gay ideas; and there are some which make us bad company to all but ourselves--nay even to ourselves," added he, with a sigh,

Why are our apprehensions so trembly alive, Amelia? My eye, I fear, understood him, though I stifled the blush--I determinately hemmed away the sigh.

"You are unjust to yourself, Sir John."

"Ah! could I think you sincere, Madam, in saying so!"

"I never yet sacrificed one virtue to fashion; nor, if I did, would sincerity be the first of my oblations, since that is the basis of all the others: but how long have you been thus humble?"

"Ever since I knew you."

"I will begone then," cried I hastily, "that you may recover your consequence with yourself."

"I cannot resolve to part with you, Madam, till I apprise you of a circum-

stance which mutually affects our happiness."

" I know not *any thing* that can do so."

" Ah! do you deny me the relief of complaint, when you know the cause I have for it?"

" What would you insinuate, Sir John? —because preyed upon by vague suspicions yourself, must you impart them to me? I have a nature incapable of doubt; but did I entertain any, be assured that I should choose for my confidant him only who created it: and give me leave to add, that the man will preserve very little of my esteem, who seeks to rob my husband of it. It is mean, cruel, obtrusive; rather marks the enemy than the friend."

" Dear Lady Westbury!" answered he in a tone of exultation, " recollect yourself—I named not my Lord, and find that I rather may *gather* than *give* a doubt."

And now I blushed indeed—thus to

have gratified him, and humbled myself.
Finding I spoke not, he added

“ Not that the idea is new to my
mind ”

“ Sir !” cried I, half tempted to urge
an explanation, my heart throbbing
doubly quick with anger and apprehen-
sion—“ Yet of what importance are
your impressions to me ?”

“ Your agitation confutes your words,
Lady Westbury ;—strange indeed would
it be to see a lovely susceptible woman
slighted and insensible to it !”

“ I never, Sir John, was accustomed
to discuss points so delicate, and should
lose my own esteem were I to do so now.”
I rose to go ; but he caught my hand,
and grasped it so obstinately that I
could not wring it from him.

“ No, Madam, I have not found
chance so much my friend, as thus to lose
this happy one.”

“ What do you mean ?” cried I, in-
dignantly.

" Not to let you go, till I have laid open my whole heart to you."

" Before you utter another word, Sir, think whom you thus insolently detain :—is nothing due to consanguinity—hospitality ?"

" Both those ties are already violated ; and I now can consider only your severity, and my own hard fate. Alas ! that both husband and wife should equally destroy my peace !"

I trembled—faltered—was ready to weep, but felt that I must not for a moment desert myself.

" It would be an affectation which I should disdain, Sir John, to say that I have overlooked affronts sufficiently obvious.—I perceive that you have ranked me among the weak women who take pleasure in admiration, which they ought rather to blush at exciting :—be undeceived, when I coolly tell you that I shall ever regard such behaviour only with the contempt it merits."

" If you despise all who admire you,

few indeed will boast of your Ladyship's good opinion."

" Undeserved compliments palliate affronts only to the weakest part of my sex. Admiration is an honourable tribute which virtue may pay, and virtue may accept ; but such admiration is of too sublime a nature to be expressed, and must pass from heart to heart by intuition. Little indeed should I merit the love of Lord Westbury, did I desire that of any other man :—it is not more my interest than my pride—my pleasure, to deserve it."

" Oh ! would that it *were* all your own, since it is indeed so necessary to your happiness ! Enjoy, however, the delusion —he must be a savage who would wish to rob you of it."

The dangerous compassion these words implied, had all the cruel effect he wished. I had suppressed to the utmost the struggles of my mind, and now sunk into the seat pale as death : but nature getting at once the better, I burst into

such a copious flood of tears, as saved me from fainting ; sobbing out with difficulty, " I know not, Sir John, by what right you presume thus to distress me."

" Dearest, loveliest of women ! it is you who distress me—it is you alone who hold my hand when urged to demand—."

Again my tears overflowed—" Oh, not for worlds !" cried I, hardly knowing what I said.

" Deign but to interest yourself in my fate, and I will never claim any satisfaction, but that of which you may one day think me worthy." —

Meanness and insolence like this, nerved me at once. I blushed to have been parleying, even when a life far more dear than my own was at stake ; and rising, warned him against any repetition of this behaviour, on which condition alone I would conceal what had passed.

" I ask no concealment," cried he haughty enough—" let my love be as

public as your own merit :" and still he grasped my hand.

" This is the most incorrigible presumption !—Pay me, Sir John, if not the respect due to Lord Westbury's wife, that due to my sex."

" I do !" exclaimed he, dropping on his knee—" I worship you !—I will do any thing but part with you in displeasure."

I know not what I uttered as I cast my eyes fearfully on him, myself, the water, shrubbery, and house ; for I recollect that the back front commanded this pavilion. But it was nigh noon,—the servants were all busy,—the guests all abroad,—and not a creature in view. I suppose I had said, " What will my Lord think ?" by his answer.

" Why should I care ?—I have no fears of him."

" But you know too well that I have, and presume in proportion."

" Wherefore should I fear him ?—Am I the aggressor ?—Oh ! I could tell you "(alas !

he had found again the vulnerable part of my soul)—“ But I insist on being allowed to do myself justice : never will I rise from this spot, till you promise me a hearing, a full, a candid hearing ; grant it me, I entreat—never will I rise from your feet, never part with this trembling hand, without that assurance.”—

Heaven at that juncture suggested to me how I should extricate myself from this dilemma, which every moment made more dangerous. I paused ; and at length, with surely an excusable equivocation, faltered out, “ Expect me to-morrow, in the dusk of the evening, in the library.” The vanity of the wretch allowed him not to perceive the finesse of these words ; and after kissing, and squeezing my poor hands till they were black and blue, he rose from his hateful posture, and vanished.

Such is my disdain of even the shadow of deceit, that I quite longed to avow the truth.

Already ill, already agitated, I hardly could totter to the house : my bounding

heart sending all its horrors through each busy pulse. Alas ! is this man every way a villain, or has he cause for his suspicions ? though to hear, *him* reflect on my Lord, was impossible, a thousand weighty nothings flashed across my mind, which corroborated his implication, and totally disconcerted me. Is it wonderful that my tears, my blushes, would speak for me ? suspicion, in a generous mind, is strong as transient ; and I have never learnt to hide my feeling : yet, now I am once again in my own apartment, something bids me take comfort. I cannot think so worldly a libertine would feel thus the injury, were it ascertained ; and so deep a sense of dishonour, while yet he has only surmise to go upon, ought to persuade me that it is merely the trick of his vanity, and licentious ideas of women. What ! shall I rob him whom I love, admire, reverence, of a reliance on his conduct, and grant that reliance to the man whom I have reason to despise ? The heinous behaviour of Lisle admits not of aggravated

tion ; beneath the roof which shelters him from merited misfortunes, to insult the wife of his benefactor, is an outrage too enormous, however refined. I have at length learnt the folly of attempting to wash an Ethiop white ; and when once these dangerous inmates quit the house, will avoid henceforward all acts of supererogation.

Among the things that have given weight to my fears, is your silence, my Amelia. Were they without cause, you would have been impatient to dispel them, and your silence is sufficiently explicit. The petulance of this pair has long been obvious enough, though they forbore differing in company. The sarcasms of Sir John, and the callous levity of his Lady, had struck you : they go on in the same way, while my Lord certainly studies to soothe and flatter her. Can it indeed be so ?— quickly then may death end my inflictions, and lessen his guilt : nor does the first motive influence me more than the last. Well I know that he cannot be happy

while conscious he renders me wretched; and I would have him happy at whatever price.

Even now my agitation subsides not; I weep and tremble as I write. Sir John's impertinence to me, was doubly unpardonable just now. I shall never know a peaceful moment till the Lисles are far away; and hardly have power to get ready for dinner: could I condescend to a falsehood, I should shut myself up, and send word I was indisposed; but that I disdain. I must leave off and dress: as exterior is the only advantage Lady Lisle could have over me, I will have the comfort of thinking that if she is preferred, I have not caused it by neglecting myself.

* * * * *

Amelia, I thought this morning my peace secure. Sheltered in the arms of Lord Westbury, I vainly hoped that no pain, no care, no sorrow, ever more could reach me.—Ah! how did I err! bitterness and chagrin marked the return of my Lord: I met him as I entered the saloon,

and thinking that he looked ill, took his hand with a tender enquiry. Without uttering one word, he drew it from me; and retiring to the bow-window, threw himself at length on the cushions, and complained of the head-ach. Such a return to my kindness, struck a deadly chill to my heart, and hurt me the more sensibly as that odious Lisle was present. I nevertheless meant to sit down by him, and chafe his temples; but Lady Lisle took possession of the seat, and gave him her salts;—he answered *her* with a smile. What were then my thoughts! I will not repeat, I will not even remember them;—indeed I know not that I *could*; the swell was so great, the confusion so overwhelming. Tottering to the extremity of the room, I hardly knew that another creature was present; the soft whispering assiduity of Sir John, alone reminded me of it:—could a look kill, he had never more troubled me.

I retired as soon as I properly could,

and Lady Lisle receives in my place Lady Cliffden and the Archers. I see them; as I sit in my closet, gaily rowing on the lake: even now Lord Westbury does not appear to have recovered his temper. The teasing of Lady Lisle cannot engage him to assist her in an employ which he often shares with me; and poor Jove, our favourite swan, sails away, indignant of food from any hand but mine or my Lord's.

Sometimes I fancy that Lord Westbury might have seen this insolent man at my feet: yet James assures me that she saw him ride with Lady Lisle up the avenue after I was dressed; and so soon did he join the company, as to make it almost impossible for any one to have told him, what scarcely a being could know. What then can I conclude? A trifle never thus discomposed him, nor am I conscious of the smallest omission or caprice: if thus tenacious, surely he indirectly accuses himself. Why will he always defeat his own wishes? I claim no indulg-

ence in consideration of my state ; but these anxieties will, I fear, be too much for me.

I have appointed Mr. Milward to keep my equivocal assignation in the library : his years, his holy profession, his sanctity of mind, may, if the libertine is not quite hardened, operate on his conscience, and induce him to withdraw at once from a house in which he can no longer hope a welcome. In a short time I shall judge it wise to inform my Lord of the whole truth. Ah ! what but his safety could ensure my silence even for a moment !—but, oh ! those consequences ! Rather than Lord Westbury should draw his sword for me, I would support the most complicated evils.

Perhaps I am afflicting myself for a petty caprice of temper, which he has already forgotten : I must correct this dangerous delicacy of my own. I will not reproach him even by a tear ; but, assuming ease, I will hasten to the company immediately.

Oh ! never tell me, Amelia, that we cannot love too well, when a single look fills me with such unutterable anguish ; for, in spite of my best resolves, these obstinate tears continue to flow.

LETTER CLVII,

MRS. FORRESTER.

Arlington Court,

AGAIN I fly to my pen to relieve my heart, by a little exhausting its emotions on paper. Why cannot I drop these tears on your sympathising bosom ? Cast at once from that which I have long made my heaven, where, where shall I discharge this load of anguish ? for, alas ! in seeking to subdue it, I may again be subdued. Yesterday, I fear, was the last of my happiness ; and many like this I surely cannot survive.

What an evening have I spent ! — ob-

liged to half choke myself, that I might check my ready tears; and smile at the gay follies of the set, among whom I presided; while our worthless guests were the most lively of the party. Lord Westbury only appeared absent, grave, and so impatient to be alone, that supper was hardly over before he left us, to answer, as he said, a letter of importance. Judge how I was disposed to join in catches and glees for the amusement of my company. How severely at such moments do we pass sentence on the pleasures of others! How low in the rank of creation sometimes sink those who seem born to fill the first place!

The welcome carriages at length were ready, and the party took leave. In my way to my chamber, I looked into the study, and fancying that my Lord seemed more himself, I ventured to ask if he meant to follow me. He "*did not know,*" was his disobliging answer; and, affecting to be busy in writing, he half shook that

hand from his arm, which he has often knelt to kiss enraptured.

I could not resolve to humble myself further;—no, not to have preserved my life, could I have uttered another syllable.—And why, indeed, should I? Tenderness, anxious tenderness, must, I fear, have been my fault; though the guard I have kept on it, often made him in pleasure reproach me.

Alas! perhaps even you may live to hate me; for when Lord Westbury can treat me thus, what can I believe, but that excess in either love or friendship will produce aversion? The sweetness of confiding fondness would have enabled me to face danger, poverty, nay death itself, with resolution: but his unkindness!—Oh, Amelia! the unkindness of the man whom we love, is the greatest of human inflictions, and one which Job himself knew not.

It is an hour since I sat down in my wrapping-gown, and yet Lord Westbury:

is not coming.—No matter—I think I had best go to-bed, lest he should fancy that I play *the wife*: a term of reproach, in these refined days, when every thing almost is inverted.

* * * * *

This tedious night is at length over, and my Lord has left word that he stays out the whole day. I affected to be asleep when he quitted my room, and thus avoided the necessity of speaking. Lady Lisle too rode out on horseback, but not with him:—where either of them may be gone, I know not.

I can now without impropriety pass this day entirely in my own apartment, and avoid that odious Lisle. Indeed, I know not how I could leave it, for my harassed spirits cause me such severe nervous head-achs, as can only be sufficiently pitied by those who are unfortunate enough to feel them.

Nothing now will interfere with Mr. Milward's task in the library.—May he

have power to awaken shame and remorse in this young libertine ! that, by his withdrawing from this house, I may be spared the part of my anxiety which he now causes. This effort of prudence I have besought God to crown with success : for, were my fears of the future dissipated, the dignity of my nature would, I think, support me under the present. I do not voluntarily harbour low suspicions. I have long beheld every virtue of Lord Westbury with idolatry : and to see those perverted, as much to the ruin of his own happiness as mine, is the only evil I should quite sink under.

I must lie down, and try to assuage my pain.--Oh ! this aching head and heart ! they disorder every pulse, and both burn intensely.

* * * * *

My awakening was blest by your letter. Ever kind—ever sympathising—consolation is but another name for my Amelia ! Yes, I already feel something

of that determined complacency which you recommend. Sleep has a little soothed my indisposition, and cooled my imagination. Believe me, that I will *not* lightly credit appearances. His generosity—his integrity—both perfect. My own too at least unsullied. No, my heart may easily be broken, but no human being shall be able to narrow it.

What a term do you inadvertently give to this light coquette?—*my rival?* No, Amelia, that she can never be. A good wife can never know a rival; for the woman who would become so, forfeits for ever in the attempt her title to the name.

Peace will, I trust in God, return to us by slow degrees. Mr. Milward has just called to let me know that he has prevailed, by touching the libertine's pride: for his heart, it appears, was impenetrable. But to stay here, after another person was informed of his conduct, and commissioned to request his

departure, was impossible. Thus far, you see, I have acted rightly.

* * * * *

Sir John has sent me up his parting adieu, and is already gone off to town. I feel myself lightened beyond imagination. Be assured I will pay every attention to that advice which is given me by experience and affection: to obtain leisure for this, I will now retire to bed. Indeed I can hardly keep out of it.—I wonder whether Lady Lisle will follow her husband?

Yours ever.

LETTER CLVIII.

TO LADY WESTBURY.

Percy Vale.

BY one of the most singular accidents that ever occurred, or rather

perhaps by the immediate ordination of Heaven, I am permitted to render the most amiable of friends an important service. A single moment may be of consequence to her happiness ; and however incoherent my detail may appear, I am ready to attest it in the most solemn manner. I pray Heaven that it may arrive in time to defeat the infernal artifice practised against a happiness more perfect than usually falls to the lot of mortality ! Let me not lose one precious instant.—

Sir George and our male friends having quitted us to attend the assizes yesterday, I proposed to Marianne, as the weather was uncommonly beautiful, to mount our horses, and make our favourite circuit. We had been riding about an hour, when, from the clearest glowing summer evening I ever beheld, in five minutes an immense cloud broke in volumes over the whole horizon, and, with deluges of rain, burst into thunder as tremendous as that which you cannot have for-

gotten our hearing on the night when my uncle died. You know that a horror of this concussion of the elements is among the many weaknesses of your little friend. Childish as you have often called it, bless the hour henceforward when first it was indulged. Not daring to trust to the shelter of trees, we rode on, streaming with the rain, to the Prospect-house on the hill. Heated as we were, I thought it imprudent to risk changing our dresses, even for the good woman's Sunday habiliments ; and proposed to your sister to have a bed warmed, and retire thither, while our habits, &c. were dried. Our hair and feet were bathed in brandy ; and seeing no hopes of an abatement of the storm, but rather that it settled into an early night, both agreed to send home the grooms, and take to our good woman's pillows till the morning. Directions were therefore dispatched to our maids for a fresh assortment of clothes, and snug in our bed we partook a boiled chicken, and composed ourselves to rest.

One of those dear luxurious naps which fatigue alone can procure us, was, however, suddenly broken by the entrance of travellers, who were driven to this house, like ourselves, by stress of weather.—You know the large room. The dame has only one bed besides her own, which we had made choice of, to make sure of escaping colds. The strangers stalked about, and made a horrid noise with their boots, ringing the bells, &c. I wished them a thousand miles off; but your sister sweetly slept on. The room is very large, and they supt at the further end of it: nor did it occur to me that I knew either of the men, till they drew towards the head of their bed, which stood against ours. Indeed a slight and temporary partition; which the people occasionally remove for dances, or justice meetings, alone divided the chambers: it was ill put together, for I saw the light; and from distinguishing the voices of two men, became attentive to their discourse. Comp-

plaints of the inconvenience of having only one bed, and a few curses on the hardness of that, prefaced the more important conversation; and I became impatient to make them quiet, when I thought that I heard Arlington Court mentioned. Curiosity quickened my hearing; and raising myself on my elbow, I was soon convinced that the speaker must be Sir George Clifford. The storm had now ceased, and a silence, only to be known in places so solitary, succeeded. Clifford continued to dwell on some scheme which he had suggested to Sir John Lisle and his flippant wife.—(Ah! little did I surmise its horrid nature!)—The unknown, in return, drew a just picture of the parties, speaking so lightly of the lady, that I can never number her among my acquaintances again; and insisting, that, though feasible enough in design, Cifford's plan would fail in the execution, through the weak vanity of either the one or the other.—“I do n't think so,” said Sir George—(Sir Beelzebub say I): “such

fellows are apter to succeed than bold ones like you or me. Women are never afraid of *them*, and always sensible of that obsequious attention and adulation, which it costs them no trouble to shew. A well-imagined contrast in a coat and waistcoat—a pretty fancy in a button or a sword-knot—are of wonderful importance in the eyes of the ladies. What other advantage has my brother over me?"—(there's a comparison for you, my dear!)—"yet he carries the world before him among the women. All this is natural to Lisle: and as it is no less important to his interest than his inclination to succeed, I think he will be on his guard. I find his progress is beyond my hopes: she is as jealous as the devil already; and if she has not occasion for it, by what you now tell me, the merit must be Ned's. As to Lisle, I do not, fairly speaking, wish him to succeed; if once he is thought to do so, it would answer my purpose better, and vex her most. I discovered her character and Ned's by the fracas

they had in the honey-moon, and planned my scheme accordingly. So inveterately do I hate her, that, independent of its being my interest to prevent her bringing an heir into the world, it would gratify me to see her go out of it. Now her life, if I could contrive to part them, you know, would most effectually secure my succession."

I imagine by this time that you see my landlady's nicely-pinched nightcap give way to the hair under it, which "stood on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine." So thoroughly was I shocked and astonished, that, to convince myself I had not been dreaming all this, I waked Miss Marianne, and whispered her to tell me whose voice she heard. Whether finding Clifford so near her made her think he was *too* near, I cannot say; but I had some difficulty to keep her from jumping out of bed to run home, which, lightly accoutred as we were, and in such pleasant weather, would have been a most delectable jaunt. Not but she had

reason enough for her fears, as this very wight once before so conducted himself as to frighten her out of her wits, and the sudden appearance of Percival alone then, perhaps, saved her. While trying to compose her spirits, and convince her that if silent she could be in no danger, I lost a part of this blessed conversation, and took up the thread where the known fiend was complimenting the unknown one, on his *ingenuity*, which he called the true art of living.—“ Ah, George !” added he, “ had I had half your shrewdness I might as easily have got rid of my plague as yourself ;—but, confound my wife ! she is so virtuous that—unless crying, scolding, and praying, were pleas in Doctors Commons—I must drag my chain to the grave. Those fine fellows, Bennett and Browne, laid a wager which should conquer, and neither of them left an effort untried, but without success. Though had I locked her up, the very spirit of perverseness might have made her, as your spouse did, run away with the gaoler ; especially if,

with your adroitness, I had chosen a handsome fellow for the office. But the world is so cursed knowing, that were I immediately to try your secret it would be smoked. However, let madam look to herself by-and-bye!"

So you find this--(what shall I call him?--I disgrace his renowned ancestors to give him the name of Clifford, and Lord Westbury to call him his brother)--this wretch of yours deliberately planned his own dishonour, that the consequences of it might enable him to dispose at pleasure of the weak unfortunate woman who had enriched him by her choice. Could I have wondered at any thing that man did who injured you, I should never have got over this conviction of his black heart. For my life, I could not find out his companion: but admirably had the devil paired the fiends, when he sent them back on earth to do his dirty work.

I almost wrung poor Marianne's hand off to make her hold her tongue, and use her ears only; for she kept muttering every

minute—"Lord preserve us!—Sure the roof will drop over our heads!"—with many other pretty feminine exclamations not more useful, and quite as nonsensical.

"Faith!" resumed Sir Beelzebub, "I think you may bear with your rib, as she is handsome and notable,—a better kind of housekeeper,—and ready to bring you an heir whenever you are not afraid of being elbowed out of fashion by your own brat. Nor have you any gallantries but among the gay part of the sex, to whom your engaged state is rather an advantage; as they can plead no claims which might embroil you with fathers and brothers. But I have a cursed foolish fancy of always liking some beautiful frost-piece whom I cannot get. You shall see the inexorable charmer to-morrow who reigns at present so absolutely in my heart, that to secure her I could almost sue for a divorce, though I left myself without a guinea.—That she should be the sister of the woman whom I most hate renders the matter complete:—were she

not, I would not work thus like a mole underground. She lives, too, with that pert ugly witch—Harrington's wife ; and no sooner do I get a glance at my goddess, than *she* pops her Medusa phiz forward to petrify me. However, I now come down to see what I can make of my charmer. My passions are up in arms ; she has none to awaken or offend ; and, by Heaven ! she had not best drive me to extremities ; for have her I will, though her life or mine were the forfeit."

At this furious declaration your poor intimidated sister clung as close to me as if Clifford had known her near neighbourhood, or I had been able to protect her. I had much ado to re-assure her ; and here again we lost the chain of discourse. The stranger was talking now of you, and expressing some doubts whether, if he were successful, Lisle would divulge the secret, lest a duel should follow. Clifford answered, that on condition his success should be divulged alone had he agreed to supply Lisle's extravagances,

and promised him a considerable remuneration : nor was it requisite that the discovery should be made while he was on the spot, since a letter would be quite as convincing. But *that*, he added, was Lisle's affair ; and duels had always been fortunate to the younger brothers of his family : as Ned was the third in the last six generations who had so obtained the title, which by the same means he might yet lose.

Here is a glorious villain ! who makes nothing ofconcerting the ruin, misery, and death, of half a dozen of his best friends and nearest relations, while he secures himself from both public and private justice ! Heaven knows what diabolical tales of future ruin these wretches would have made me mistress of, had I not most unluckily sneezed. The attempt which I made to be unheard convinced them that the person was awake ; and though they probably thought their neighbour was only a servant in

the house, they spoke not one word afterwards.

Had we lived in the days of Grecian mythology, I should have concluded that Jupiter had again clubb'd two nights in one, for never was I so weary of waiting for day. I tumbled myself into a fever, without once opening my lips ; for when the vile wretches were silent you might have heard a pin drop. With the dawn we both arose, and, glad to get our half-dry clothes on, stole down, dreading to awaken our neighbours while we were thus without protection. No sooner did we espy the post-chaise at the bottom of the hill, than away we ran, and jumping in, amazed the men by commanding them to fly as fast as the horses could go towards home, where we arrived at sun-rise. The moment Sir George comes in from hunting we will be off for London, as the only way of shutting our doors on the wretches without an explanation. It is possible, indeed, that they

may have the curiosity to enquire, or their servants may be eager to inform them, who were their neighbours last night, and in that case, at a door of mine *one* of the two, at least, I think, will never appear more.

* * * * *

You would smile at the astonishment of Sir George, who, though he has been proved often guilty of knowing a pretty girl when he saw one, had neither head nor heart for these fine modes of getting at her. He had half a mind not to stir a step, but to brush up all the rusty blunderbusses, and give these recreant knights a mortal defiance.—“Brush up your stable-boys, honest man!” replied I, “and get us a couple more horses to the coach; for in another fortnight, you know, we must have gone to London to settle a matter of business.” My kind words, and a kind kiss, brought my spouse to reason; and in the twinkling of an eye we shall be gone, accompanied by every thing male here, and every thing iron.

Poor Marianne languishes in her heart to awaken and carry off with us her lazy knight, Percival, and cries out every minute, in the hope of spiriting me up to this,—“ What will your cousin think of this strange flight ?”—“ Think ! why, that we are women, child, and not to be wondered at do what we will.”—“ They will, perhaps, go to his house.”—“ What then, dear ? they will not run away with Ned ; nor will *he* be prevailed on to run away from them. But, if you think it necessary, we will send him a spare blunderbuss, to protect himself, or, if you choose it, to avenge you.”—This hint has quieted her completely ; yet she looks as demurely as if she knew not what fear was.

Pardon my usual oddity. You know it is impossible for me to avoid it : and if the hangman stood ready to do me a favour in his way, it is a hundred to one but I should laugh out at sight of his white cap and sleeves.

That Heaven may have protected you

from the deeply-meditated villany, is my fervent prayer. If unfortunately your peace should have been injured by it, this happy and extraordinary disclosure may restore it. Above all, do not conceal my letter from Lord Westbury. We shall be in town by the time it reaches you : and fear not but we will take care of your sister. Adieu, my sweet Percy!

Yours ever,

S. HARINGTON.

LETTER CLIX.

TO LADY HARINGTON.

Arlington Court.

DEAR, inconsiderate, careless friend ! what a distress do I owe even to your kindness ! I am at this moment rather tempted to load you with reproaches, than make those acknowledgements which you doubtless expect from me. That you should give

your letter to Sir George to enclose, does not surprise me ; but that you could omit to seal and address it first to myself, is what I cannot account for ; especially as you must well know that Sir George need not have franked any letter with Lord Westbury's name upon it. Had I got yours, without its first being opened and perused by my Lord (who, with great reason, supposed it to be meant for himself), I might have found some mode of softening to him that dreadful disclosure which, by your oversight, met his eye, in the most unqualified manner. I fear it has for ever alienated him from the man who must yet always be his brother. Grieved as I must be to witness the strong emotions of his mind, I am yet more grieved that there should exist a wretch whose conduct justifies an indignation like that which my Lord feels.

Some severe head and heart aches have been hitherto my only sufferings from this new mode of persecution ; what evils I might have known, but for this providential

discovery, it is impossible to calculate. Alas ! is the malice of man then never to be appeased !—My very soul sinks at the idea of the diabolical ways which the vile Clifford may yet find out to torment us. As to his base confederates in this last deep-laid scene of villainy, poverty, the evil which they most dread, must infallibly be their portion.

Most tenderly do I thank you for the protection you have given to my sister, at the expence of your own ease. My Lord proposes hastening to town to end your alarms, and take charge of Marianne himself. Mrs. Forrester is not yet returned ; and if I leave this place, I shall oblige Lady Lisle to do the same, without being absolutely shocking to her : indeed it would be advisable for me to be making some preparations which I cannot manage so well in the country. It is astonishing that a constitution long since irreparably impaired, should have resisted the various attacks of this polished savage, whose ultimate view will not, I really believe, be

accomplished. Too much do I owe to the beloved of my heart, not to wish the life prolonged to which he gives such a value; and that babe in existence, who may at once confine the sphere of his uncle's actions, and perpetuate the virtues of his father.

In a few days I shall follow my letter, and thank my thoughtless Sophia, with an affectionate embrace. C. WESTBURY.

LETTER CLX.

TO SIR GEORGE CLIFFORD, BART.

SIR,

AS the only return you have thought proper to make me, for having permitted you to share, without limitation, my fortune and friendship, is to aim, with an hitherto undiscovered subtlety, a succession of blows at my honour and life, as well as at an honour and life yet dearer to me than my own; I will endeavour to lessen your guilt, by cancelling all ties of

affinity, or affectation of regard. I command you, from this moment, never to enter a house where I am master; nor ever to mention my wife, but with the respect which she is accustomed to receive from all other men. On these conditions, and these alone, will I conceal from our mutual acquaintance the crimes which you have committed, as well as those you have meditated. Do not flatter yourself that you can escape obloquy, however ingenious you may have been in eluding the laws of your country. I can produce evidence against you so indubitable, that your character in society will be irreparably lost, if, by any further insult or injury, you compel me to an explanation.

Release immediately from her strict imprisonment your poor, weak, deluded wife; unless you find yourself courageous enough to avow the infamous collusion by which you dishonoured yourself, no less than your victim. Restore to her likewise a due portion of that fortune which

you ought to blush by such means to appropriate.

Beware how you put yourself within reach of the law, by the slightest attempt upon Miss Rivers; she despises and abhors—that is, she *knows you* :—she is in my protection, and I shall both guard and avenge her, at the hazard of either my fortune or my life. I almost doubt whether I am not wanting in my duty to society, when I thus qualify my sense of injury, and turn a monster loose upon mankind. I shudder to recollect that the man whom I am obliged to term so, was born of the same parents with

WESTBURY.

TO LADY WESTBURY.

LETTER CLXI.

London.

WELL, my dear little irascible Percy (though, entre nous, if you are so easily discomposed, I shall hereafter give you the additional appellation of *Hotspur*), here we all are, in whole skins, and unpursued by the two recreant knights: though I cannot help laughing at Marianne, who would rather, I verily believe, have encountered the danger, than that we should have made this rout for nothing. Hardly did we pass a mile-stone upon the road, without her head being popt out, to the great annoyance of Sir George's—(only, thank Heaven, his is pretty thick, so that she hurt her own the most of the two).—“Oh, Heavens! *now* they *are* coming!” would she exclaim, almost in an agony: “look out yourself—there they are! both in green coats.” In vain, after coolly reconnoi-

tring through my glass the objects of her terror, did I pronounce them to be only a couple of hawthorn-bushes that had sprung up on a division of the road :—“ Ay, but think, Lady Harington, what a wide heath we are upon.”—“ That is the very reason, my dear, why I conclude we must be safe ; as we now can see for miles around us.” Then would my good man descant upon what he, and the other blunderbusses in our train, would do, in case of molestation. Little Master Percy had more success in relieving and diverting us, when he imitated the fierce looks of his heroic father ; for, to my great comfort, he does not take after Astyanax, but boldly stares at every plume, whether on man or woman.

But seriously, my dear Cecilia, what an undiscerning as well as ungrateful mortal are you become ! Surely you would not fall out with me for the completion of my kindness. I thought the plan of misdirecting my letter, a chef-d’œuvre; and one not unworthy your own delicate mind. I know your exquisite

Séize of apprehension, nor dared I trust to your communicating to Lord Westbury in a plain unvarnished manner the project of his brother: and nothing but his being perfectly informed on the occasion, would perhaps have defeated the villain; nor was it possible for me to address to himself such a history of a wretch so nearly allied to him. Plain truth is the only thing in which you refined sentimental folks are not skilled: and hardly any thing is so injurious to matrimonial happiness, as reserve or disguise; it is risking the loss of the heart you love best. When we wander through a fog, there are twenty ways to go wrong, and only one which can lead us aright; and he must be lucky who always fixes upon that. Give me a good storm; for though it wets you to the skin, the prospect is only cleared by it, and home is visible at once to your eyes. Lord Westbury is of my temper; and I knew that you would soon learn the whole story from a nature so impassioned and frank as his: you are

but a woman, though the first of your sex. Breathe not, however, this implied pre-eminence of the other, to any creature who can tell Sir George.—There would be no living in future, so insolent would be his exultation.

We are all expecting you with the utmost impatience: as to Marianne, she is quite silly with her fears; and, I verily believe, would rather sleep with Sir George than in any bed but mine. Adieu! my beloved, admired, almost adored, Cecilia!—Grant, upon reflection, that for once your little thoughtless friend has been prudent; and do not grudge the only moment of triumph she can ever have over you, to

S. HARINGTON.

LETTER CLXII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

THE extinction of one fear, seems, where I am concerned, only to make way

for another. As I felt very languid, and continually expected you at Arlington, I forbore, my Amelia, committing to paper what I could so easily have verbally communicated. Read Lady Harington's letter, which I enclose; and bless the Power which rescued your Cecilia, and her beloved, from so deep and complicated a scheme of villainy.—My only fear at present is for Marianne, and that will not distress you like any which respected myself.

I well recollect that I closed my last epistle as I was going alone to bed.—Comforted both by the perusal of your affectionate letter, and the departure of that presuming Lisle, I dropt into a happier slumber than I had known for an age. It was not however so sound, but that I heard the rattle of an approaching carriage, and reached the dressing-room window time enough to see Lady Lisle alight. It is true that she could not have passed through the hall before Lord Westbury rode up, but he made no ef-

fort to follow her : but calling for a flambeau, he made the groom examine with him his favourite horse, from a supposition that the creature had been hurt ; and as he talked, he continued to lean his arm over the neck of the animal, in an attitude so graceful, that I almost fancied he knew I was looking at him. I returned to my bed, however, long before he could reach the chamber. That they should both come home almost at a moment, and yet not appear to have been of the same party, you will own was singular : that my Lord should almost be wanting in politeness to her, seemed only an artful neglect. Alas ! such is the corroding nature of jealousy, that by a refinement of fear, it extracts suspicion from love itself.

My Lord generally dismisses his valet in a moment :—he came softly into the chamber, and, from my silence, no doubt concluded me to be asleep. He threw himself into a chair which I had quitted, and the curtain of the bed was sufficiently

open for me, without moving, to discern all that passed. He rested his cheek on his hand, and after holding for some little time before his eyes (which obviously heed-ed not its contents) the book which I had left turned down on the table, he sometimes rivetted his looks to the carpet, then, biting his lips, raised them with an angry look to the ceiling. Recalling himself at intervals, he would roll his eyes heavily round as oppressed by inten-seness of thought. Starts like these, could not but increase both my suspi-cions and my grief. Sighs too, and im-perfect exclamations, were sometimes mingled with them :—nor did I fail to re-mark his neglected appearance. Far from indicating in his dress a wish to please, or the consciousness of a happy lover, he seemed not to have changed it since the morning, and his hair shaded his pale countenance with very unusual disorder. Inferring from this dereliction of self, that his principles opposed his in-clination, I thought him hardly more

happy in indulging his inclination, than he would have been had he contended with it. Yet from the disregard of his appearance, I drew a conclusion in my own favour, since it seemed to shew that he was ashamed of attempting to please a woman who was so unworthy of the wish. That heart, sighed I, which finds it so painful to err, will yet return to virtue and to thee;—have patience then, thou overswelling one!—Yet, oh! how fugitive the hope! how exquisite the fear! I now moved my hand—indeed I was obliged to raise it to dry my tears. Lord Westbury fancying that he had awakened me, drew near, and looked through the bed-curtains. Again I counterfeited sleep, for I dared not trust my voice to utter one syllable. Oh! how was I tried, when, sinking on his knees, he caught my passive hand, and first pressing it fondly, he blest it at once with a kiss and a tear, murmuring in a broken tone, “Sweet slumbering angel! how shall I ever be worthy of thee?” With what dif-

ficulty did I stifle the bitter sobs with which my bosom struggled at this poignant mark of his esteem ! As I found that the fear of disturbing me kept him up, I spoke to intreat he would never distress me by that overkindness; and became again sleepy, or apparently so.

Lord Westbury rose early, and I was told went out immediately. I know not whether I was glad or sorry, to find that Lady Lisle meant to torture me with her company the whole day. Childish, fliprant, and loquacious, as usual, she vented, as I supposed, her own spleen for the absence of my husband, by presuming to rally me on driving him from home by my tears and gravity: impertinently adding, that all this weeping was a mighty bad prognostic of the *present* which I should make to the family; and she would lay any wager that Lady Sarah would be disappointed a third time, by my producing only a little whimpering girl. This was mere badinage you will say,

but I was not able to judge her fairly ; and although I would not gratify her by admitting her speech to be an affront, as a freedom it did not please me.

I was however condemned to be at her disposal ; since it became impossible for me to leave my guest, unless I had provided her with other company. On the presumption, however, that I might be intitled to the same indulgence I shewed, I added my dear girls to our party. Never did they appear to me so interesting. Alas ! a painful feeling in my own bosom made them so : for if I was destined to lose the love of their father, mine would soon become their all.

The intervals of time which my Lord necessarily spent at home for several of the following days, could not but be un-social, if not cheerless, to both of us. Yet so guarded were we in shewing mutual attention, that strangers would have concluded our matrimonial happiness perfect ; while those who knew us well,

must have felt our total want of it—as each, it was obvious, assiduously sought to detain any third person, lest the withdrawing of the visitor should leave us alone one moment with each other.

Sir William Archer's long-expected fate on the return of his eldest son, began on Monday. Lady Lisle, sick to death of Arlington, received her consignment of millinery from London, and revived as she consulted with her maid on the proper times for displaying it. I charged my Lord with my excuses; but saw him, to my great surprise, return to sup, as he said, with me. I had passed the whole day in the room adjoining his conservatory, which I have had finished since you left us. It is panelled with my embroidery; and under each panel are drawers and cases for every material necessary to accommodate those who are inclined to diligence. My musical instruments have been carried there; in the fond hope of sometimes luring from the library on the other side, him whom alone I

would wish to lure. Thither had I resorted from the dinner table, to direct two young women who work under my eye; and I was giving Louisa a lesson in drawing, when Lord Westbury's unexpected entrance blest us all with a holiday. Yet I could perceive that he too was glad of the addition of the children's company; and having indulged them both with a game at romps, he fell fast asleep on the sopha, with his youngest daughter in his arms, in the same state. The elder played the woman, though it cost her an effort to keep her eyes open.

Tuesday my Lord united his name in the excuse which I sent our neighbours: but they knew his value too well to admit it. Lady Archer came over herself, as she said, to see me; but to carry Lord Westbury back with her, was the object of her visit.

Again in the evening my Lord returned home; and even earlier than on Monday:—to avoid, as he told me, a drinking party. I was busily at work, and

quitted my tambour-frame to welcome him. He drew my arm through his own, and held it to his bosom for a moment; while he fixed his eyes on mine with an air of melancholy tenderness, that wrung my very soul;—he then dropt my hand, and walked about the room in silence; often sighing profoundly. Alas! he returns, perhaps, only from decency, thought I, and his better part is left behind him. I resumed my work in silence; having by a sign relieved my diligent associates, who withdrew. Lord Westbury threw himself on the sopha by me, and often in apparent playfulness interrupted my progress; but neither of us had the heart to talk. The more he seemed to seek an explanation, the more I became fixed not to desire one; and thus, by false refinements, and vain imaginations, I sacrificed some of the sweetest moments which human life can afford: for his generous heart was ready to overflow into mine, had I given him but the smallest encouragement. Thrown off by

me he knew not why, his eye wandered round the room for some other object; and fixed at last on a letter from Sir George Harington, which I had forgotten to tell him had been brought from the post in the morning. He rose, and with great indolence opened it. I had so little idea that it could contain any thing interesting, as never to turn towards him, till his agitated and impassioned exclamations startled and distressed me. His eye flamed with anger, his lips were white with indignation, and every quivering feature spoke his acute feelings, before he could recollect himself enough to understand my questions, or find voice to reply to them. The emotion which this sudden rage could not but excite in me, obliged him to make an effort to control it. Drawing me towards him, and straining me to the only heart that mine ever throbbed to approach, he uttered every endearing appellation which love could dictate, or matrimony sanction. Think of the frozen point we had

previously reached, and judge what I must feel at so unaccountable, so unforeseen a transition. My feebler faculties were wholly overpowered; and had not tears, at once a woman's grief and blessing, most seasonably come to my aid, I must have sunk under the keen extacy of such a moment. Again I implored him to speak, and save me from fainting.
“I see at last the truth!” cried he.
“Yes, I now see all the truth!—Mutually guilty, neither you nor I, my Cecilia, need blush in the presence of the other. Listen to me for a few moments, my love, and I in turn will hear all that speaks in your eyes—all that throbs in that bosom where my happiness is treasured.

“I forget which day it was in the last week, but you by circumstances will recollect it, that we all agreed to ride out on the following morning. You told us at breakfast that you were not well enough to be of the party, and of course we departed without you. We had hardly galloped a single mile before Sir John

Lisle's stirrup broke ; and though half a dozen grooms offered to supply him with one of theirs, he obstinately persisted in going back for another of his own, promising to rejoin us by the time that we had paid our visit to young Archer. I found that gentleman with his father in the pleasure-grounds, directing the alteration ; and began discussing with both of them the improvements which I was making in my own. A reference to my draught at once convinced me that I had it not in my pocket-book ; and that the men would work wrong the whole day, for want of proper direction, as the plan had been revised and altered the night before. After rummaging first my pockets, and then my brain, I recollect that I must have taken the draught out in the Chin  e Pavilion, when I spoke to the gardener, and have left both that and my pocket-book on the table. I did not choose to submit the latter to the inspection of my groom, which I could avoid only by being my own messenger. I took the

shortest road, of course past through the labourers; and committing my horse to their care, leapt the ha-ha; and finding both plan and pocket-book on the sopha in the Pavilion, I gave the gardener the former, and turned over the latter to observe whether any other person had inspected or plundered it. The rushing sound of the water, and the shady coolness of the retreat, united with the heat and fatigue which I had previously undergone to lull me into an imperfect slumber;—for I soon started at the voices of some persons in the arcade under me. I stooped over the open window, and was upon the point of calling to the speakers, when I distinguished the voice of Lisle. I immediately recollected his obstinacy as to returning, and the strangeness of its ostensible motive.—With these reflections came the conviction that he was making love. I put my head yet further out of the window, but could not see the lady, which only increased my curiosity to know the object of his impassioned importunity. I be-

came profoundly silent and attentive, when I heard him implore for an assignation, where "he should not be under the same odious restraint." He urged—he would not be denied. Imagination could supply me with no object for all this ardour who was above the condition of a chambermaid ; nor did I think a spot which was obvious to every window of the mansion, well chosen for any married man to woo a damsel of that description. The fair-one spoke low ; I bent more forward, and became all ear : but I was turned almost into a statue, when I recognised the voice of my Cecilia !—Oh God ! what I felt when I found that he had not been suing in vain !—Yes, *my wife* granted his suit ; and not only granted it, but voluntarily fixed upon the most solitary building in all the grounds, and an hour which might have authorised the fondest hope in a less presuming lover. That he comprehended the extent of the indulgence, I gathered from the incoherent transport of his reply. It was to the

excess of my fury alone that I owed my remaining concealed: for you obliged him to leave you before I had regained either voice or motion. Covered with blushes, and trembling as you descended the steps, I saw you go the other way toward the house. Yes, I saw *you*;—and my disdainful soul cried every moment Is that, can that be, *my Cecilia*? I could not account for the excess of your disorder, nor the timid eye which you cast on every rose-bush, as if in each flower there lurked an informer. Yet though I moved not from the window, you, by a kind of fascination, never once turned your eye towards it. In what tumults did my soul remain for some hours after!—An angel would have failed to infect my nature with suspicion; but how could I refuse credence to yourself? Resolved on seeing to the extent the meaning of the appointment, I determined to seem ignorant of the whole till that moment; and having returned unobserved through the garden, I took my horse of the labourer

who had held him, and met the party as they came back, nor did any one know that I had not spent the whole interval with the Archers.

“What a day, what a night, did I pass! —the latter in my study: for I could not enter a chamber where I doubted another might have access. The fever which grief and weariness brought upon me, made me afraid to trust my own looks, and I therefore absented myself the whole of that memorable day; having first concealed a pair of pistols in the garden, and hampered the lock of the library door, that I might be secure of interrupting those who should resort thither: again at the close of the evening I left my groom in charge of my horse, and leapt the ha-ha; whence in a moment I darted to the library, and rushed in upon—Mr. Milward! Breathless, agitated, and armed as I appeared, he saw in a moment that I had been by some extraordinary means apprised of the appointment; to keep which with a piety and

prudence worthy of herself, my Cecilia had made him her deputy. He informed me of all that had passed ; assuring me the wretch, though vain and dissolute, was not impenetrable, and that the following morning would rid me for ever of so ungenerous an inmate.—Oh ! think of the value I set on the prudence, candour, and magnanimity, of my beloved ! Overwhelmed with confusion and regret, I, in turn, implored Mr. Milward to conceal from you that interruption which a moment might have made desperate ; and, on my part, engaged to appear ignorant of Lisle's infamous breach of hospitality. I could not wholly acquit myself for having placed in the way of a wretch whom vanity or necessity might have made a villain of at any time, the temptation which a purer nature might have been warped by.

“ From that moment I have stolen more like a thief than a beloved and happy husband to your side, nor have I spent one hour which has not been em-

bittered by the weight that has oppressed my heart. At times I found a coldness and reserve in you for which I could not account, if Milward had not betrayed me; and if he had, and you still were cold and reserved, how could I presume to supplicate for the pardon which a nature generous as yours did not spontaneously accord? Till this memorable moment the suspicion of design never occurred to me.—Elaborate, diabolical design!—The blackest, most infernal malignity! All that I have said,—all that I can ever say,—would be inadequate to preparing you for the contents of Lady Harington's letter. Here you will learn that the fiend whom hell let loose upon us, had not even passion to plead for a breach of hospitality, which might almost justify us in shutting our doors on misfortune, and abjuring all sympathy and benevolence. But for that fiend, yet blacker than himself, what punishment can I imprecate? I bless Heaven, dreadful as the tie makes his

crime, t t he is my brother--lest the enormous provocation should tempt me to a vengeance which would be as inadequate to his guilt as to my sense of it."

With this agitating address did Lord Westbury give into my hands the enclosed letter. As I read it, every emotion in turn shook my frame; but terror was the strongest.--Alas! is it a crime never to be pardoned that we are good and happy? Have I, or my Lord, been guilty of any other to excite the venom of these vipers? During the time I pondered upon Lady Harington's alarming intelligence, Lord Westbury sent off a hasty epistle to his brother, which was, I fear, as cutting as language could make it. To get rid of Lady Lisle, as well as to protect my sister, he then proposed setting out immediately for town. The displeasure with which he spoke of our female guest, convinces me that he regards her coquetting with him in the same light in which it appeared to me, though he is too manly

to impute design to one of her sex.
What a double escape have we had !

Could we have enjoyed the perfect re-union produced by this eclaircissement, without a reference to the past, or a fear of the future, it would have been exquisite : but neither of us can consider without horror the inveterate malignity of a man so nearly allied to both. Alas ! something suggests to me that I cannot much longer contend with it ; for though my Lord keeps me in his heart of hearts, nay, hardly suffers me to quit his sight, my rest is broken, my appetite lost, and I vainly struggle not to be apprehensive and anxious. To God do I humbly address myself, on the subject of the mighty future. He who gave me so much, must take it away at his own good pleasure : and since I have reached the very summit of happiness, as to descend is always more difficult than to climb, on his divine aid it is my interest, no less than duty, to rely. I had not enjoyed my present lot when I fancied that

content could not be found in any other : for all earthly bliss is but comparative, and we are, perhaps, restrained from too fervent an aspiration for that of Heaven, only by the impossibility of forming any comparison.

After a thousand fluctuations of mind, I have at length determined to encounter the approaching crisis of my fate at Arlington. I know by your experience that I shall be provided with all proper assistance, and I shall have the benefit of your tender care, without selfishly tearing you from your children. Among my anxieties, do not reckon too great a one on this occasion. It seems contrary to the order of Providence that a woman should die in the natural act of giving life ; and although such a calamity sometimes occurs, I cannot but impute it rather to mismanagement in the surrounding persons. I wish I could persuade my friends to think as valiantly as I do on that subject.

Marianne is in future to reside with us. You know the insanity to which she is subject: that, and her childish fears for herself, make her the most ill-suited companion I could have at this juncture. My Lord, I fancy, wishes her snug again with Lady Harington, though he is too generous to say so, even to me.

Adieu!

CECILIA WESTBURY.

LETTER CLXIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Sir James Monro's, Windsor.

IN precisely defining the term—happiness, perhaps more than two individuals never agree, and not often that very limited number. Yet such a passion have most of our friends to make us happy their way, that they will not allow us to become so our own. The

good souls with whom I now am, the Trevilians, the Harringtons, all are so obstinately intent on amusing me, that they combine to rob me of those rich sources of delight with which I am blest by Heaven. They tear me from my home; my children, my husband,—or insist on my sharing the company of the latter with a circle to whom I only grudge it because they do not know half its value: and when these kind confederates have involved us in a thousand giddy engagements, they congratulate themselves on having driven away *thought* from my mind. Ah! when was that ever done by a crowd? Yet may I not be in reality ungrateful, when I so severely reflect upon those who are willing to share with me the whole of what they call—felicity?

My junto here, say that they have the authority of the faculty for thinking a frequent change of air and succession of objects to be necessary to my health and spirits. One, therefore, way-lays me at Richmond; another entraps me at Windsor;

and I should not wonder if somebody, more enterprising than the rest, should carry me off to Penzance. The whole party, except myself, seem mightily inclined to ramble; and like children, whose heads are filled with ghost stories, they refuse to stir unless in a body.

We are now at a delightful lodge, which Sir James Monro has borrowed of a friend who is on the Continent; and Lady Sarah makes a little queen of me, only, as some one in a play says, she chooses to be queen over me. A very gay circle of society has the dear old lady assembled in honour of your Cecilia, and gaily do we spend our time:—dressing, dancing, singing, feasting from morning to night;—parties in the forest, or parties on the water;—the Cydnus not more beautiful than the Thames, nor Cleopatra herself more elegantly accommodated. Then we have a beautiful moon, and shady walks broken only by her soothing light. I sometimes touch my harp at the parlour window, and set

the musical part of the company off with, “ Here, in cool grot,” which is the very utmost latitude that our queen major will allow to such a poor thing as I pass for.—A mighty pretty way of spending time this ! I think I hear my Amelia say : ay, and so should I say, my dear, were I permitted to be more than a spectator from the Pavilion. But there—as troublesome as Sancho’s physician, only with more kindness—sits our aunt by my side ; interfering on every occasion with the authority of matronage, and the tedious fondness of advanced life. “ Heavens ! Lady Westbury ! you would not do this ?”—“ My good niece, do not think of doing the other.”—Now I walk myself to death, and am as pale as ashes—Then I sit still too long, and have a decided hectic on my cheek. If I want appetite, she laments that I shall certainly starve *more* than myself ; but if the fresh air has inclined me to eat, as it now and then does, she warns me against *over-feeding* : and she is sure to cram me with the only

dish at the table of which I could not make a good meal, because it is *so fit* for me. Heaven send the dear man had had an heir before I was the party concerned ! for I should pity an empress if she were to be as much restricted. In addition to this, I am rendered the object of every eye—the care of every officious fool. I often see my Lord so provoked at her harassing conduct, as to be strongly tempted to quarrel with his old aunt, and carry me off at once. To prevent which, I am reduced instantaneously to sacrifice my inclination, and falsely assert that I am not making any sacrifice at all. Whenever Lady Sarah sees me quite overcome with her importunity, she thinks no concession too great. She huffs Sir James, disobliges all her company, and attacks even my Lord ; requiring him to confess that he is in the wrong, when the only culprit is herself. In short, she fancies that she has the talent of managing every person around her, while a child may discover that she

never knows how to manage her own temper.

Having been obliged, whether she would or not, to know the ultimate object of Mr. Clifford's persecution, she holds herself doubly bound to watch over both me and the heir whose birth alone can punish him. She has renounced that nephew who was so long her favourite; reprobates the Lisle's, and has shut her door for ever on both husband and wife; making it her duty, as well as pleasure, to guard and distinguish me on the occasion. We easily pardon the generous errors of a weak head and a good heart:—that is, when we are not actually suffering by them, which I am sorry to add is the case of your poor Cecilia at this present writing. In consequence of one of the old lady's whims, I am shut within the house, and left quite alone this morning:—because she had the head-ach, she thought proper to predict thunder, and though she gave all the rest of the company her free permission to be

struck by the lightning, or soaked in the rain, I could not obtain it, nor break the spell she cast around me; notwithstanding the weather was very fine, and I assured her, that, should it become otherwise, I had no childish fear of the elements, and could take care of myself.

—“But, my dear Lady Westbury,” she whispers emphatically, “you must recollect that you have *more* than yourself to take care of.”—“Would to Heaven that my aunt would take care of only *herself!*” grumbled my Lord in my other ear. So, to prevent his speaking out, I suddenly found my nerves completely impressed with the old lady’s fears.

Yes, it seems mighty likely to thunder!—not the glorious seventh day, when the Almighty, surveying his own beautiful work, pronounced all to be good, could surpass this in brightness: yet here must I sit by myself—reading, working, singing, fretting, and looking at intervals out of the window, to wile away the time, for I positively refused to let

my Lord stay at home, only because I was condemned to imprisonment. Ah ! what do I see !—Lord Westbury himself, cantering through the avenue—returning for me, I doubt not, when he saw the day settle into clearness and beauty. How tender, how kind, how like himself is this delicate instance of attention ! I could find in my heart to provoke Lady Sarah, and make my escape with him at once during her absence :—he sees me !—he smiles as sweetly as the heaven to which he points.—I must fly down to meet him, and shew the gratitude which so pleasing an instance of his watchful affection claims.

He is gone to enquire if any carriage has been left at home this morning, that I may be able to quit the phaeton, should a sudden storm come on. In what a happy temper are we with each other !—quite in the humour to say fine things.—I told him that he did not look half so charming in my eyes the morning I married him ; and, not to be wanting, he re-

plied that I look as I did the morning after.

He has just met with a very beautiful horse, which he is impatient to purchase: as I think riding one of my Lord's vanities (if an exercise which shews at once his grace, symmetry, and skill, can justly be termed so), I am not sure that this has not contributed to the sweetness of his humour. Even the most rational men make a *second* favourite of a horse; and truly some think the wife should be grateful if the horse is not *first* in the calculation. My Lord reads this over my shoulder, and vows that he has half a mind to punish my satirical remark, by mounting his Bucephalus, and leaving me to go alone in the close carriage. To shew him that I have not lived with Lady Sarah for nothing, I answer with one of her implications, "if he dare."

* * * * *

Alas, my Amelia! in a few hours what strange vicissitudes may human life present to us!—how seldom does the

temper, any more than the weather, pass through the day without a cloud, or some unforeseen transition ! The gay ebullitions of my heart are on the other side of the paper, while this will contain a dark, dark picture. The shortness of the course of those who follow evil, has passed into a proverb ; but that rather ought to stamp the impression on the mind, than weaken it. A strange, a busy chance, seems in this various world at once to combine and divide us : or rather an over-ruling Providence works at due time its own great ends. The fluctuations of the ever-changing scene, and our own particular interest in what passes immediately around us, limit our observation, which naturally dwells upon the gaudy few who reach the splendour to which they aspire ; nor looks down to see in the fangs of conscience, and the agonies of death, the miserable many who expiate in part on this side the grave, the sins of which they have been guilty. The fate of Lady Killarney, and another event of

this day, not less memorable, will ever make me peculiarly attentive to the immediate judgements of Heaven.

Lord Westbury was driving me very leisurely through the most shady and retired part of the forest, while we were so deep in conversation, that the horses almost chose their own path. On a level, very near the road which we had taken, we perceived an empty hack chaise, which several persons were tying up, as the spring had given way: as a man seemed to be lying at some little distance on the grass, we both concluded that this person had been thrown from his horse, and hurt by the fall. My Lord bade a groom ride forward to ask if he could be of any use: the gentleman to whom the man addressed himself came towards us, and we both recognised in him a surgeon of the neighbourhood. We understood from him that the gentleman on the grass had just been wounded, as it appeared to him mortally, in a duel; but that those present had been in hopes of conveying him home

in the chaise, when it unluckily became useless : if my Lord, therefore, would accommodate the sufferer with the empty carriage behind us, it would be an act of humanity. The serenity of the weather made it improbable that I should want it, and I would have spared an absolute convenience on a much less interesting occasion ; but as the assistance of our grooms seemed to be alike necessary, my Lord drew further on, under the shade of a large chestnut tree, to save me alike from the heat, and the sight of the wounded man, whom he stood up in the phaeton to see ; but he electrified me in a moment, as my start did him, by exclaiming " Monro !" — " Who ?" cried I.— " No one you know, my life :—a wretched coxcomb whom you may perhaps have seen, the handsome Monro." — " Oh, but I do know him !" cried I, ready to spring out of the carriage ; " I must speak to him this moment—if he has life I must speak to him, or I shall reproach myself as long as I exist.—Do not talk to me ! (for my love had said some-

thing, in a tender tone, of my suffering from the shock); "I know not any suffering like the consciousness of failing in one's duty." The impetuosity of my manner astounded my Lord, who certainly would not have suffered me to approach the wounded man, had I left him one moment of reflection. I was out of the phaeton with the lightness of childhood, and rather flew than ran to the chaise, into which the people had just lifted the dying wretch. He was not quite insensible; for on my repeating his name, he faintly opened his eyes, though he fixed them on some other person.—"If in this dreadful moment, Mr. Monro," cried I, with sufficient energy, "you hope a heaven, or fear a hell, remember and be just to Amelia Fermor—she yet lives—your miserable victim!" At that well-known name he shivered convulsively, and his lips moved, but not a sound could they utter: when, with a deep groan, he fainted away. I thought that he was dead, and was near swooning myself; the surgeon

prudently gave me drops, and a violent burst of tears relieved me. The reproaches with which my Lord loaded himself, for suffering me, whatever my motive, to approach a man in the state of Monro, recalled my attention: but the horror of seeing a soul, while thus weighed down by secret guilt, compelled in a moment to quit this world; and the dread that he might now want the power, as he before had wanted the inclination, to make a poor restitution of fortune (the only token of his penitence which he could now offer) to his injured and amiable relation; might well swallow up in me every consideration, and overwhelm a nature as animated and susceptible as mine ever is. Lord Westbury led me a little way on the turf, and sitting down by me, under a spreading oak, he soothed my agitated feelings, and became the depositary of my poor Amelia's miserable secret. My vehement apostrophe to Monro had, indeed, half unravelled the mystery. Shocked as I was, and saddened as he be-

eame, we found ourselves much fitter for each other's society, under an old tree, than to join that company which we knew to be now waiting for us: however, we endeavoured to conquer our own feelings; and our delay was accounted for, by a brief relation of the incident. Lady Sarah blessed herself at my going out, after all that she had said. Some of the party wondered at the duel: some wept at seeing me do so: all enquired the when, how, and where; and being told that we had not sought the least information, looked at us as though we were creatures of another world. They ingeniously made the story out by guesses; shrugged their shoulders, and hob'd and nob'd to cheer their drooping spirits, till Monro was as much forgotten, as he deserved to be.

In the evening, the same surgeon called upon my Lord, to inform him that Mr. Monro had only a few hours to live; and that the earnest wish he had repeatedly expressed to see me, had induced his afflicted wife to implore that I would in-

dulge his dying desire: to her request the ambassador added, that he seemed to have something on his mind, which might be made easier would I comply. I was ready, and indeed impatient; but my Lord was no longer inclined to allow of what he called one of my acts of supererogation. I became, however, so earnest in my intreaties—urging that all the danger I could find from seeing Monro was already incurred, and the only thing likely to prevent my suffering from the scene of the morning would be to discharge my mind of every duty and feeling in which he was concerned, after which so worthless an object would have no hold on my sensibility—that at length my Lord, most unwillingly, consented to my going; and drove me himself at once, to prevent Lady Sarah's interference, and to conceal from the circle in her house a visit so extraordinary. After waiting a few moments, till Monro's chamber was cleared of medical men and attendants, I was intreated to enter it alone: I, however,

declined going, except in the company of Lord Westbury; and this caused another delay. Both of us were then requested to walk in ; and the servants having placed chairs by the bedside, withdrew. The disorder of the room—the dim light that gleamed from a distant part of it—the wan face on which my eyes rested, and the consciousness that the last agony of death would, perhaps even while I gazed, render it yet more ghastly, might well have affected the strongest frame of nerves : in my state, the whole was peculiarly shocking. I became sensible that my love likewise trembled ; for his hand grasped mine, and his looks dwelt on me with the most anxious tenderness.

Monro faintly raised his eyes several times before he gathered strength, or perhaps resolution, to speak.—Those fine eyes which only yesterday swam in the brilliant fluid of pleasure—alas ! they now seemed to want perception to distinguish the most common object :—already dead, but for an often-changing distortion.—“ I had little reason, Ma-

dam," cried he, in a feeble, inward voice, "to hope for this condescension; but I could not die in peace without the humiliation I owe to you, which Heaven has made—as you see—ample. By the benevolent adjuration which you gave me in the forest, I am led to suppose that you know the retreat of my injured cousin: if so, inform the unfortunate Amelia that I have benefited by your warning call; and employed the interval since I saw you in making such a disposition of my fortune, as will restore to her that portion which she ought to have inherited. Mrs. Monro is informed of this disposition of my property; though not of the melancholy story which induced it:—that," added he, after a struggle, "prudence and self-love have hitherto confined to this bosom, where it will be buried. Add further, that I have neither time nor courage to supplicate her pardon; but such trust have I in her yielding nature, as to make me hope that she will forgive me—in the grave. I have

been a presuming, vain, worldly, worthless wretch ;—but you see the expiation. I owe likewise to yourself, Lady Westbury, a personal acknowledgement. *I* never can add to the injuries done, or meditated, against you ; but beware of—.” He was going, I doubt not, to add *Clifford* ; but my Lord, as eager as myself to catch accents which every moment rendered more imperfect, bent forwards to ascertain the name ; and the dying man fixed his eyes on a face which made him pause, and lose that utterance which he never recovered. In vain we both conjured, implored him to conclude :—a fruitless effort he made threw him into convulsions ; and my Lord carried me into the anti-chamber, while he sent in the medical attendants. Horror and apprehension now grew too powerful in me, and I hardly knew how to conceal their effects, or get home. My Lord obtained a moment’s audience of Mrs. Monro, to intreat her at some interval, when the faculties of her husband re-

turned, to urge him to finish a sentence so important to our future comfort. She faithfully promised not to forget our request;—and surely I have a right to this little attention, who shewed her so great a one in coming at all: but whether her own distress made her regardless of mine, or Monro really never spoke more, I know not; certain it is, that he never uttered the name of the person of whom he has left us in dread. I find he expired at three in the morning—the victim of his own falsehood and vanity.

The circle in which I am impute levity of conduct to Mrs. Dillon, by whose husband's arm he fell: but I well know the baseness of which Monro was capable; and she is so young, and lovely, that it was hard to resist her own vanity, and his admiration. I have seen so many instances of indiscretion in women while the heart was uncorrupted, and such unbounded vanity without any beauty to excuse it, that I am tempted to pardon much to those who are handsome and admired:

and this in prudence we ought to do, lest we drive them into becoming *un*pardonable. Would those women who boast a character too exemplary for contamination dare always to diffuse their own purity, how many of their own sex who are tottering on the verge of error might be saved from a life of iniquity!

I mean to write to Miss Fermor, and endeavour to win her back to England. Money will, I am persuaded, either obtain her a dispensation from her vows, or enable her to quit the convent. Mrs. Dillon is, I am told, going to follow her husband to France immediately. I have had influence enough with Lady Harington to prevail on her to accompany me in the visit which I mean to pay to this censured young creature. Our countenance may be of advantage to her, and she will safely convey my letter to Amelia.

LETTER CLXIV.

TO MISS FERMOR.

(Superscribed "To Sister H. Marie, Convent St.")

WILL my sweet Amelia once more allow me to intrude into the holy solitude in which she is buried, with news of this world? My first letter could only tell her that Heaven had rendered me happy; my next will tell her that it is yet in her choice to become so. Alas, my dear! the man who steeped your youth in sorrow, and impelled you to seclusion, has expiated his crime towards you, and others of our sex, with his life; and died in a cause as little honourable as those for which he lived! A singular chance, or rather an ordination of Providence, brought me into his way at the hour of mortality; and Heaven gave me presence of mind to throw him upon his own conscience, by naming you. In

consequence of this well-timed admonition, his will divides all his property between you and his equally-suffering wife. He has left, we are informed, fifty thousand pounds, chiefly derived from Lady Austin, with eight hundred a-year paternal estate. Mrs. Monro is sole executrix, and admits you to be heiress to a moiety, which you may claim whenever you either send or come over to assert your rights.

The only motive which you could possibly have for hiding yourself in a cloister being now removed, you will I hope do yourself and the world the justice once more to rejoin those who love you. Formed as you are to adorn social life, you must not devote the rest of yours to the only situation in which it could be useless. Too infamous was Mr. Monro's conduct for him to publish your story; and by this means, and this alone perhaps, has it hitherto been buried in oblivion.—Not even his widow guesses that his bequest is a mere retribution.

Enter life, then, my sweet girl, under happier auspices; and endeavour to banish from your own mind circumstances which now exist only in that. Providence has been pleased to elevate me to a situation where I can prove the truth of the tenderness which I ever felt for you. He who is the guardian of my heart, will, if you wish it, become so to your person and fortune. Lord Westbury participates the delight of his wife in becoming the means of restoring you to society.

Return to England, then, my gentle Amelia! and share with me a home which is blest with love—fortune—distinction—happiness. In beholding my enjoyments, you will find that softness revive in your own nature, which a savage early took a barbarous pleasure in destroying. But all his sex do not resemble Monro; and you may yet find that love has power enough to crown your days with every extending tie which sweetens society.

I cannot think but your understanding is too good for you to conceive yourself bound by a vow that, strictly speaking, it is rather criminal to *make*, than to *break*. Let us fairly enquire into the origin of convents. To fix them on the best footing, they were first formed by a very small number of devotees, who, being persuaded that nothing but God could be worthy the sublime sensations of their souls, withdrew from the world, lest its wants and wishes should interfere with their high pursuits; and in thus devoting themselves to the Deity, they perhaps most securely indulged that vanity which more or less influences all human determinations. But what does this prove?—Alas! only the factitious glory which we know how to diffuse and appropriate even from our weaknesses.

A second class of young women now quitted the world from motives of mere prudence. Worn out with a train of early inflictions, many made up their minds to be satisfied with a fate which could

never extend beyond tranquillity; nor would their limited fortunes afford them even that, unless in a community: and this in my mind is the only valuable class of nuns, since these forsake not the world till they have borne their sad part in its duties.

Convents, in process of time, became politically used, I might rather say, abused. A part of the nobility, too indolent, or too ignorant, to educate their own offspring, and too proud to allow any of their children to enter the world with a very narrow income, placed those who were thus circumstanced early in nunneries, that they might be flattered into renouncing a world which they had never seen, while its every good was as carefully veiled from their observation, as the evils of the mode of life which they were to be won to embrace. Alas! to such youthful victims the discontents within the walls ever heighten the idea of that happiness which they still fancy is to be found *without* them. It is often

the fate of these interesting nuns to lament through life that pride in their parents which, though only a weakness in some instances, in this becomes a crime.

Where does the gospel dictate such a sequestration of the sexes? Nay, where does it treat their union as a fault? If it were, indeed, so, God would doubtless have implanted in the elect of one sex an aversion to the other: but I fancy that we might search through every nunnery and monastery in every kingdom, and not find ten of the professed who would avow so preposterous an aversion. Institutions which were planned from motives of enthusiasm, are supported by those of convenience: but can vows made from such motives become solemn or binding? If, on the contrary, these vows are ordained by God, and pronounced by choice at his altar, why does he not make his most devoted suppliants happy?—Not even you can settle this point; and I have now only to bring you to admit with me that a more justi-

fiable motive than that which *caused*, may *cancel*, monastic vows. Nor need I seek any argument to bring conviction : for an existence at once useless to ourselves and others, can never be meritorious. It is, in fact, a kind of *mental suicide*.

Those humble peasants who lead a race of dutiful and diligent children to the foot of the altar, must ever be more welcome to Him to whom it is consecrated, than a train of kneeling nuns. Alas ! they assume often the title of the *spouse of God* merely to evade those laborious duties which the *spouse of man* cannot ; and God frequently punishes such selfish presumption by making a gloomy listlessness the reward of voluntary indolence.

The uniformity of a cloister, far from cherishing the virtues, often annihilates them. Friendship is the only good which can ripen there to its extent ; and that, by not admitting a change of object, or interchange of good offices, sinks, at length, into a cold good-will.

In a word, gratitude and penitence, which alone can dictate or sanctify sequestered devotion, can never be reduced to rule; and we may as well say that we will be hungry at such a time, as thankful or sorry: and without one feeling or the other, can drowsy matins, or mumbled vespers, bring us nearer to salvation? In fact, what subject does such a kind of life supply for gratitude? It is the various claims upon our exertions, to which we in the world look both up and down;—the benefits we now receive, and now confer;—the daily blest vicissitude of active virtue, which keeps gratitude alive in the human heart—that only universal tribute of imperfect humanity. This world is, therefore, indubitably our station; and to acquit ourselves well of the duties which it imposes, will make a better our certain reward.

Did I not believe your piety and resignation to be untinctured with prejudice or bigotry, I should not have ventured to discuss so solemn a considera-

tion as the monastic tie. But whenever religion has been our subject, I have always found such a noble and dignified sense of it in your discourse, that I thought it wisdom, till this juncture, to conceal the sentiments which I now declare, lest you should find them, unhappily, conclusive enough to prevent you from making those vows which alone seemed to promise you peace. Though in some forms of faith you and I may differ, that I profess, with a large scope embraces the *good* of all persuasions: nor can you, I am persuaded, so rigidly conform to yours as to consign me to perdition.

Return then to England, my dear Amelia, where no being now exists who can pain or reproach you. Unite your destiny with mine, and imagine that it is Heaven itself recalls you, when it vests in your hands such an ample means of blessing others. Oh, come then! dispense your own beneficence, and soon will you say that an active life is a pious

one. When the channel is between you and France you may feel easy, for no denunciation from the papal chair can affect you here. The abolition of that tyranny makes us pardon one of our kings a whole life of enormities.

Mrs. Dillon will wait on you a few days hence for an answer to this. If fear or prudence should prevent your writing your sentiments, one word, a single "yes," will enfranchise you. My Lord has considered how he may effect your release, and will wait at Dover himself to conduct you to your

CECILIA WESTBURY.

LETTER CLXV.

TO THE COUNTESS OF WESTBURY,

Convent de ——.

MRS. DILLON, who conveyed your letter, my dear friend, was no less quick than cautious in its delivery: but, oh,

my amiable, susceptible, monitress ! where slept the exquisite softnesses of your own nature when you wrote it ? Can you love, and imagine it possible that I should hear of the death of Monroe without a pang ?—and what a death too ! —Alas ! in the very bloom of his treacherous beauty !—You seem, methinks, to mention his dreadful fate with pleasure. Oh ! pardon the involuntary reproach—pardon, too, the tears which blot this paper :—worthless as he was, no other object ever gave life to my affections, and they can expire but with me !

May his soul find from the God whom he has more offended, that pardon which mine most solemnly accords to him ! is my earnest, almost my only, supplication, at the foot of that altar where, with the deepest contrition, I daily sue for my own. The grave—the silent, awful, grave—obliterates in the dead all sense of injury :—and shall the survivor cherish any ?—Oh ! how were that to abuse knowledge and humanity !—I now must

endeavour to forget that he made himself my fate in this world, and prepare to meet him in another.

My ardent, generous friend ! how are your friendly arguments lost on me !—One consideration of all those which you suggest alone lives in my mind. Shall I return, to flutter in the fortunes of Monro ?—Oh ! never—never ! He might rob me of mine, but to accept his would fill me with everlasting horror.

Nor am I among either your bigoted or your early devoted class of nuns.—No, I rank with that set whom a sad plunge into life has driven to entombing themselves voluntarily in a cloister.—And what, were I to quit it, would you find me ? —a pale and solitary spectre, gliding by your side, and chilling those social pleasures which it would not be possible for me to share. Oh ! too well do I love you, thus to repay your kindness ! Alas, my dear ! how can you fancy that my story would be unknown ! It is written on my very features. Sorrow and bitter-

ness was their first expression, nor have I had cause for a happier : of course they were stamped with indelible gloom.—Love, friendship, distinction—gay, gay chimeras ! your vivid hues are but the reflections of happiness ! Long, long may you play around Lady Westbury !

My destiny, too, is visibly decided. The New River gave me a tendency to an asthma, which gains so fast upon my constitution that, did I even wish it, I could not quit this asylum. Pardon an apparent insensibility of your affection, which proceeds from the very reverse.—Oh ! had I been insensible—but why should I look back for affliction ?

Suffer me to encroach on your kindness so far as to keep, for the short term of my life, that pension which I owe to your liberal nature and improved fortune ; lest the little indulgences which I may need in sickness, being derived from Monro, should convey poison to my heart, and make me completely sink under my sufferings.

Not that I am proud enough to reject a bequest which I, with you, consider merely as a restitution. I would fain, on the contrary, interest you in its application. May I not hope that you will form, at your leisure, a plan for an asylum for a certain number (in proportion to the means) of female orphans, under the age of fifteen, too well born for a life of mere labour, and too destitute for any other mode of subsisting? My Lord will, I doubt not, have the goodness to direct the necessary legal instruments to be drawn, which will invest you both with the disposal of my late acquisition; and I will regularly sign and attest them. Should Lord Westbury deign to become the guardian of such an institution, he will add a title to those which he already bears not unworthy either of himself or of them. And if his charming Lady would descend to regulate and preside in the education of this most forlorn set of beings, she will keep alive in her own

bosom the brightest of all her perfections.

Sometimes, when she casts her indulgent eye over those who owe their preservation to my ruin, I will allow her, sighing, o remember, that had benevolence earlier formed such an institution, it might have preserved to her that friend, whose last prayer will be for her health and happiness.

A. FERMOR.

LETTER CLXVI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Richmond.

YOUR poor little friend, Marianne, is never allowed the pleasure of addressing you, dear Mrs. Forrester, but when we are all in a bustle, and she has only bad news to communicate. You will think that my sister is the most unlucky of

women. On Sir James Monro's returning to town, we all left Windsor, and our party stopt here to dine with the Trevilian family ; but to get from them for a few days was an impossibility. Surely there are such things as forebodings, and our poor Cecilia had one ; for she could have cried when they made her promise to stay. My Lord suspected that she hated to comply ; but she would not own the truth, as she saw that he was well pleased with the invitation. I must own, I thought this was all mighty foolish ; but I will never more meddle between married people.

Yesterday the rain had, at last, laid the intolerable dust, and the sky was divine indeed. We were all very gay, and agreed to ride through the Park. Lord Westbury mounted his new horse ; an amazing fine creature, but too full of mettle, if not downright vicious. My sister was with Mr. Trevilian in his low phaeton, and the Haringtons in their high one : Mrs. Trevilian and myself,

with Captain Percival, were of the equestrian party. Whether Lord Westbury was exercising his skill in horsemanship, or the troublesome animal had been trying any trick, I cannot say, for Percival happened to be telling me an occurrence which entirely withdrew my attention from the company; but all of a sudden off flew the unmanageable beast, nor could my Lord, incomparably as he rides, rein him in. Just by the sheet of water, after leaping and rearing in a frightful manner, the animal fell back, as it seemed, full upon my Lord. I was in an agony myself; but Captain Percival all at once cried out, in a voice of thunder—"Oh, my God! she will fall and dash her brains out!" I now turned towards my sister, who, being on the rising ground, had seen too plainly my Lord's danger. She had started up in the phaeton to spring out; but being held fast by Mr. Trevilian, when she saw her husband and the horse fall, she sunk back with a groan that promised to be her last.

Percival was with her in a moment ; and lifting her out quite lifeless, laid her on the grass. Happily our fears for my Lord were at an end ; as we saw him flying on foot towards us, to take care of his wife. The fern grows very high on the spot where he fell, which deceived our sight ; for neither he, nor the odious horse, were the worse for the tumble.

Poor Cecilia could not be recovered for a long, long time ; and when she at length opened her eyes, she no sooner fixed them on my Lord, than she shut them again in horror, and with convulsive tremblings fainted.

We had no hopes of her going home in the phaeton, and were apprehensive that the grass was yet damp ; so all the gentlemen dispersed to look for any party who might be taking the air, as well as ourselves. Percival met a fat old lady and her daughter, who were mighty anxious to accommodate the Countess of Westbury. Poor Cecilia, if she had been herself, would have smiled.

to have seen Lady Grantham on her plump knees; fanning the expelled insignificant Miss Rivers. Lord Westbury and I got into the carriage with Cecilia, and Miss Grantham into the phaeton:—scarce could he keep my poor sister from sinking into the bottom of the coach; and if I did not know Lady Grantham to be a fat old savage, I should have thought her a Matron, for softness and sensibility.

Mr. Trevilian had driven home as fast as he could, so that all proper assistants were in waiting when we returned.—Hardly after they brought Cecilia to herself, could she believe it possible that my Lord was merely bruised:—he submitted to be bled, to please her, but did not want that to make his complexion as pale as her own.

Lady Westbury would have it that she should be able to rise this morning; and in consequence of the attempt, relapsed into her trembling fits. Indeed the physician and surgeon both say, that nothing but her want of strength saved

her from a premature labour ; and that it will be next to a miracle if she and the child should both survive.

This terrible opinion is kept secret from herself and my Lord, who nevertheless seem separately to entertain the worst impression of the event. Sir George Harington was so unfeeling as to tell it to Captain Percival ; who suffers as much, I really believe, for my sister, as if he were her husband.

Here again is our fat friend, teasing us with enquiries to shew her attention. Poor Cecilia wants to see the old soul to thank her ;--for what ?--not shutting her coach-door on a countess--she would have done it on Miss Rivers I will engage--However, no admittance has she to-day.

I cannot but believe that Lady Westbury would have fewer of these terrible fits if my brother was away ; for she now brings them on, to my thinking, by striving to appear well while he stays, and then when he leaves her she relapses.

Lady Harington writes.

HEYDAY, Marianne ! you are one of Job's comforters, as usual.—What a chapter of lamentations has this girl composed ! Do not mind her, Mrs. Forrester ; these faintings are incidental to a fright, and will go off with that. I, Dr. Harington, who practise without a diploma, tell you so ; and here too is Ned Percival, won't leave a hair on his head for very vexation of spirit. If this is love, good Lord deliver us from it !

S. HARINGTON.

LETTER CLXVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Richmond.

DO not think of coming here, my dear Amelia, for I am impatient to be well enough to set out for Arlington ; which they say I may venture to do in a few days. I have had another severe

plunge,—so severe, that though I am assured by physicians and friends that I may get over it, I know that to be impossible.—Do not afflict yourself, nor fancy me vapourish in thus forewarning you, but rather use your reason to prepare you for the melancholy truth, which might flash too suddenly upon you otherwise. Alas, Amelia, that the vile Clifford should at last have gratified his malice!—it is too certain that he contrived both to select this vicious horse, and to get it thrown into his brother's way. I had already suffered so much, that I wanted constitution to support a new shock. One gleam of glorious sunshine has broken at intervals through the storms of fate, and that shines the more brightly as my day closes:—for myself I have ceased to implore; but for the poor infant trembling within me—spare, oh spare, Almighty God, one of us to the most deserving of men!

Conceal what I have told you of the horse, as you value Lord Westbury. Sir:

George Harington's groom knew it, as he now owns, at the time, from the man who sold the animal; but he kept the secret till too late, and let him now keep it for ever! Oh! never may the man whom I am born to resign, have so bitter an aggravation of his loss! nor learn to execrate existence before yet he reaches the middle of life!

I am still so weak, that I write wretchedly, and with difficulty (for these terrible tremblings and fainting will, it seems, be periodical, at least while I am in my present condition); yet I cannot wholly deny myself so dear; so habitual an indulgence, though perhaps it is the only one in which my love would restrict me.—We seldom write freely, when another hand transcribes; and I should weary my mind with uninteresting details, without relieving my heart.

I remember that I once told Colonel Percival, my nature was so susceptible, as to render even gratitude too animated an emotion for it. Judge then what I

feel when Lord Westbury exhausts himself in attentions. His sense of self-reproach too--his tender repinings--all of which I comprehend by a glance of his eye, often quite overwhelm me. Hardly can I endure my own share of distress, but I sink under his:--the double portion is too, too much for me. Alas! why did we ever, ever unite? since it was only to learn that we *could* have made each other happy. Yet let me not complain--rather let me be grateful for the treasure awhile entrusted to me, and restore it to the Giver of all with pious submission.--This life is perhaps but the blossom, and the next fruition.

I enclose Miss Fermor's touching answer, nor do I blame her resolve:--her youth, and perhaps health, has been blighted by a sorrow which reason cannot overcome. I offered her, as it appears, a very temporary protection. Mrs. Dillon informs me that my friend is an interesting lovely skeleton.

Mrs. Monro has been advised to

litigate a legacy so large: as Miss Fermor is peculiarly circumstanced, it would have been difficult to substantiate her claim; and even should that have been proved, the acquisition might have been demanded by the convent. But convinced by her dying husband's attestation, that all which he bequeathed to his cousin was a mere restitution, Mrs. Monro acknowledges Amelia's right to the moiety; and my Lord has obtained proper instruments to act for the generous nun. I am considering in my mind the idea conveyed in her letter; and if I have time to reduce my plan to form, shall hope to fulfil her wish.—Do you too consider how this small establishment may best be arranged; that when I come down, we may compare our separate projects, and rectify what is erroneous in each, or modify them into one. Pecuniary calculations must be made by abler financiers; nor shall I fatigue my brain with those:—one positive opinion I have, and only one; which is, never by uniformity of

dress, to load a benefit with an humiliation. Public charities are so generally marked by this ostentatious display, that I have often wondered at the oversight in the institutors. Children should be made happy as well as good, or we rob their hearts of a greater advantage than we can ever give to their understandings.

You may remember how deeply I was impressed by Lady Killarney's romantic account of poor Southwell, his wife, and their orphan children. I ever longed to do something for them, but could not embark in any project that might bring me directly or indirectly in her way. Her early and calamitous end made the orphans yet more desolate; and as I knew that Mr. Trevilian had estates in Ireland, near Fern Moor, I requested him to employ his steward in seeking these poor babes.—Alas! the little creatures were found in a wretched cabin, where they had owed existence merely to the vulgar kindness of their Irish nurse: that patroness, who squandered thousands on

herself, never once remembered them when they were out of her sight ; nor was the nurse ever paid after the first month. The little girl took the measles and died, soon after I meant to get her over to me ; but the boy arrived two days ago, and a lovely little wild Irishman he is. I hardly understand him ; and the little arch soul is diverted when he sees how he puzzles me :—he will make a sweet companion for your Charles, and Tom Montague. I mean to add him to that party at Mr. Milward's when I come down.—You cannot think what a satisfaction it will be to my mind, to rescue this unfortunate babe from poverty and ignorance. His mother seems to have been such another persecuted being as myself.

* * * * *

I was obliged to break off, on hearing my Lord's step. Alas ! how grievous is it to see yourself the cause of grief ! How ambitious are we of affection !—always craving—always grasping it with more than a miser's avarice ; assiduous to lay

up sorrow for ourselves, against those hours when least we can support it. Yet to steal out of this world unloved and unlamented—no, philosophy reaches not so far—But this dear, dear man half distracts me.—

How you please me in expatiating on the improvement of my sweet girls ! Do they owe so much to me ?—ah, never was obligation more willingly conferred ! Yet the instance you give, alarms me for their tempers ; the passions ought to be a parent's first care, for soon do they assume an incurable ascendancy. Far, far more anxious am I to give them inward than outward grace : the first will ever incite them to obtain the last ; but the last often makes them self-satisfied.

My sister is urgent to accompany me home ; but I shall not allow her so to punish herself : for, in spite of her obstinate denials, and his totally overlooking her, I cannot but see that she is irresistibly partial to Percival ; and in concealing the bias of her heart, shews that she

knows not half the value of the one which she distinguishes.—No, never shall she abandon her fond view, and all its little attendant pleasures, to partake a cheerless scene which her presence cannot animate. Happiness is in itself so transient a feeling, that whoever withholds it one moment from another, is, in my mind, guilty of a crime.

I have reason to hope that I may reach Arlington by the middle of next week: till then, my Lord insists upon deferring the journey.

Guard yourself, my beloved Amelia, I once more repeat, against shewing any surprise at the alteration which you will not fail to perceive in your poor Cecilia: that waste and paleness which Lord Westbury sees hourly, will not shock him so sensibly, unless he sees it shock another.—Oh ! whatever your thoughts may be, I charge you not to let one reach your eyes, that may sink into the heart more dear to me than life,

Adieu, best and dearest of friends !

LETTER CLXVIII.

TO LADY HARINGTON.

Arlington Court.

ALAS, dear Lady Harington ! the season of self-delusion is past ; and however unwilling you are to give up hope, you, like those about her, must too soon know the decidedly hopeless state of Lady Westbury. She will not sadden the future so far as to invite you here, in your present condition ; yet that omission is but the height of kindness.

Persuade yourself how you will, we are but too feelingly persuaded that her pure spirit is slowly retreating to the asylum where alone she can enjoy a lasting suspension of sorrow. A thorough and increasing wan ness has now finally extinguished the freshness of youth, or the delusive fatal glow of fever. She has no appetite, strength, or spirits ; and her faintings often return : yet the resigned

meekness of her soul gives a watry kind of lustre to her eyes ; and still smiling as she does with a melancholy complacency, we cannot but know that smile to be the utmost effort of virtuous resignation. Judge then what our comfort is ! Hypocrites for the first time, we all struggle to appear composed when she is present ; but in her absence, each overcharged heart vents to the other all its fears and its feelings.—Oh ! who could ever vie in tenderness with Lord Westbury ? It is now only that I know his whole merit. What a heavenly softness is there in his voice and manner, whenever he addresses his Cecilia ! till the sensibility swells beyond all control, and a precipitate retreat alone saves him from pouring forth the agony at her feet.

I can easily perceive that the wasting angel dares not discuss her own situation with any one whom she loves ; and least of all with her Lord. Her own emotions are so powerful, that thus awakened, her frame could not endure the struggle : she

is reduced to watch her own fading in total silence—such is the fate of Cecilia ! Ah, God ! are we then to lose her ?—Yet who are *we*, in the aggregate ?—Is *he* to resign her, in whose heart she is the treasured all ?—Was it for this that she forgot pride, consequence, everything but sympathy and benevolence—sought out the unfortunate—cherished the miserable—shunned not the deathbed of the guilty ?—Yet let me not, in the arrogance of short-sighted humanity, judge of that which is so far beyond my comprehension. How many evils may be now lying in wait for her behind the dark veil of futurity, which this dispensation of Heaven will save her from feeling !—It is ours to submit ; but oh ! surely we may be pardoned in sorrowing.

Even while, with heroic fortitude, she is forming herself to resign those goods : which poor mortals covet and purchase so dearly, she still preserves her attention to the welfare of those within her reach. She yesterday presided at the wedding of

Mrs. Montague with a gentleman who must one day succeed to the beatified being who once made my all of earthly happiness.

Mrs. Montague has long heard the suit of Mr. Milward without appearing affected with it ; but he found means to recommend it to our friend, who condescended to become his advocate. Mrs. Montague answered, that as she owed her very being to the kindness of Lady Westbury, she had devoted it to her service. " But why, Madam," said the dear sufferer, " should you ruin your better prospects to cancel an accidental advantage ? Think not that I did any service to *you* :—it was *myself* whom I benefited in improving your situation ; nor can you ever so well repay the obligation as by doubling it. If you have no other objection, I must plead Mr. Milward's cause. No interest can induce him to make you his choice. Forget the melancholy past ; and take, in a rational, tender, worthy husband, the

fairest chance for earthly happiness. I am an advocate for matrimony; for whom did it ever render so happy? Do not forget either that I now have it in my power to befriend you." Overcome by this emphasis, she paused, and her voice failed her: yet recollecting herself, while the tears of her heart rolled fast down her cheeks, she faintly added, "*We none of us can judge of hereafter.* It was not enough to rescue you from misery; I would have the sweet satisfaction of seeing you happy, by giving Mr. Milward your hand."—"It is at your Ladyship's disposal," cried Mrs. Montague; "your rights over *me* and mine can never be disputed."—"No, nor ever claimed, madam," sighed Cecilia.—"Oh, say not so, my benefactress; for your right is in my heart."—"No, Mrs. Montague; in giving that up, you would dearly repay so accidental an advantage—if, from the consideration of gratitude to me alone, you are induced to think of marriage."—"Ah, Madam!

what else should induce me ;—a widow —a mother?—I could bring Mr. Milward no other portion than incumbrances.”—“ He cannot so term the woman whom he loves ; and while you overlook the education of *my* children, I have adopted *yours*.” Never was emotion more powerful than in Mrs. Montague. She sunk upon her knees before the sopha on which Cecilia was lying—“ This, this is too much !” sobbed she. “ Thus let me thank my visible Providence—thus let me worship the guardian angel sent surely by Heaven itself to save me ! This cannot be a sin ; for you are too, too near being of the number of the blessed.” I could not blame the poor woman ; but this overwhelmed us all. Lady Westbury was the first who spoke.—“ My dear Mrs. Montague,” whispered she, in a faltering tone, “ be happy, but be prudent. Silence is to me now the most tender of all acknowledgements.”

Lord Westbury appointed Mrs. Montague a hundred a-year, and Mr. Mil-

ward fifty for instructing his children; independent of the curacy which he holds under his father: apartments at Arlington are allotted for both, where they are to reside; while the young Montagues are to board with my son and Southwell, at old Mr. Milward's.

You know that Cecilia often says she loves to invent the poor a holiday; and on account of this wedding she regaled the whole parish. As my Lord led his interesting helpless wife after the bride to the altar, anxiously did she cast her sweet eyes over the surrounding multitude, that not one whom she knew might escape her notice. How ardently did the poor repay her consideration with prayers and tears! I was not of that party; but when I saw her led back into the saloon, in her virgin-white—her yet untarnished bridals—drest, and looking like a sacrifice—alas! who could stand the idea?

Through the whole day she struggled to maintain the same affecting serenity:

assuring us, that she "loved to be at a wedding; for the present gave her nothing to envy—the past nothing to regret."

I am sometimes inclined to conclude, from a strict observation of this wasting angel, that the soul is the destroyer of the body, and life proves either long or short as that acts with more or less energy. Yet surely were it so, I had never lived to make the reflection.

Pardon this long incoherent scrawl. Alas! I dare not give vent to my feelings in the presence of my Lord, nor can open my heart but to one full of our Cecilia.

Yours ever,

A. F.

LETTER CLXIX.

TO LADY HARRINGTON.

Arlington Court.

JUDGE of the value I set upon your friendship, when I struggle to prove mine under so severe an infliction. The seal, the messenger—all will shew too plainly the sad purport of this letter. Yes, the pleasure of my youth—the pride of my later days—the dearest remaining blessing of my life, is now added to my treasure in a better world. A vain recollection is all now left of one who so adorned humanity, that we might truly say, we had nothing to wish for when she was with us—nothing to lament when we have wept for Cecilia.

So fast she faded, that we had every reason to apprehend she would not have strength to give her infant existence: but that tremendous fear Heaven gra-

iciously averted; for at eight yesterday morning her son was born. The intervening hours my Lord had past in a terror and an anguish hardly inferior to her own.—“Tell me not of *boys*, Mrs. Forrester,” cried he, in bitter apprehension.—“Take back the fatal gift, Oh God! and leave me her—in mercy leave me her—but her;—I ask nothing, nothing more.”

Alas! even while he spoke, the moment which was to prove the fruitlessness of this prayer approached. I started, and knew the death-stroke in the throwing open of her windows. Rapidly I flew into her apartment, where her miserable husband followed me; but a look convinced us both that she could not long survive. Already chilled by the coldness of the grave, the tremor of one of those fatal convulsions alone proved she yet breathed. Her lips and eye-lids quivered like a leaf, and were tinged with a faint purple.

At length she recovered enough to

open her heavy languid eyes, and I could perceive that they anxiously sought him who was only concealed from her by the curtain: not finding voice to ask for her Lord, she clasped my hand within her cold one, and turned back a miniature which the other hand had held pressed upon her heart. This slight motion roused him from the stupor into which he had fallen. Faint, and pale as herself, he sunk in silence by the bedside, and sobbed upon her hand; nor dared to lift his eyes to the face so dear to him. The look she fixed on him was more than human; so exquisite became the expression of tenderness and benignity. "It was this I feared, my Amelia," cried she, "and *only* this." Then grasping his hand in her feeble one, "Be comforted, my only beloved!—these struggles of exhausted nature cannot last long; and these are all which we are pardonable in bewailing." What further she uttered was slowly pronounced at intervals, as she could catch breath; and in

a tone low, tremulous, and hollow. “ Reconcile yourself, my Edward, to an event that comes not on me unawares : for I have lived to age, were we to measure time by happiness ; and the Giver of all good, in taking me from your arms, graciously receives me to his own. Where is my child ?—said you not that it was a boy ?” As the nurse held it to her lips, she gave the infant a first, last, kiss. “ Dear babe,” cried the expiring saint, in a thrilling voice, “ make thy father happy, and I shall pay even this price for thee without complaining. How often, my love, have I prayed to see you embrace a son of mine, and to die in your arms ! and Heaven has heard my prayer. Receive and bless this babe, while yet I can witness the transport.” —Alas ! agonised tears and caresses were all the welcome that Lord Westbury could give to his son. “ Make this infant, my best beloved, your care—your consolation. That mark of your tenderness alone do I require from

you. You will know my sentiments in other respects more fully hereafter."

—She paused, and swallowed some cordial which the nurse offered her; then rivetting her eyes on her husband and her son, while they shone with a beautiful rapture, the last gleam, as it appeared, of her departing soul—"I thank thee, gracious God, I thank thee! Now give *me* your hand, my soul's best love." Pressing that adored hand to lips which no longer had power to kiss it, in a voice yet more broken and inward she sighed out, "Precious, inestimable hand! dear pledge of all my human hopes! even while I resign those, I yet would retain thee."

These were the last words she uttered; though for a little while longer her lips moved without sound, and her eyes without lustre. That precious hand which she had pressed to her heart remained there when her own could hold it no longer.

Ah! well may they say that while

there is life there is hope ; for who could have thought, on beholding Lord Westbury at this moment, that he had long known it must happen ? Unconscious of his actions, he dropt the infant on the bed (though we hope the sweet babe is not hurt) ; and stood frozen, as it were, with horror. He uncovered the fair and motionless bosom of his wife, and was not to be persuaded that her heart throbbed no longer. He offered all he had in the world to the physician and surgeon, to save her ; and then treated them with the bitterest contempt, for not flattering his vain wishes. At other moments he would clasp her in his arms ; and aver that he would breathe into her a portion of his own soul, or it should follow one yet dearer.

Alas ! while yet he spoke, Death asserted all his rights over the fair form which he had claimed, and every livid feature owned his sway. Often did we urge Lord Westbury to retire, which he sometimes attempted ; but still

keeping his eyes on her, he fancied before he reached the door that he saw her move ; and insisting she had only fainted, and would die for want of help, he flew back again, once more to renew his vain, vain experiments.

Fain would I have told him that his cares were fruitless as his hopes ; but whenever I drew near to him my faculties totally failed me, and I was obliged to shrink back in silent affliction. Too soon, however, conviction, agonising conviction, came. That frame which had glowed in his arms, now stiffened there ; and the beloved chimera he so obstinately cherished could no longer delude him. A silence--how deep ! how awful !—succeeded. He then, in one vast agony of tears, took an eternal farewell of her whom he adored ; and kissing her lips, her eyes, and lastly her hands, laid them as gently down as though she could have felt his touch. Just as he reached the door he heard the helpless cry of the infant ; and, wholly unnerved, leant against it, to save

himself from falling :—“Never let me hear thee, ill-fated babe ! *never* let me hear thee !” groaned he passionately. Then relapsing into tears and tenderness, softly added—“And yet thou art now my all.”—

I followed him, for I feared that he knew not where he was ; and but for me he would indeed have wandered into the Park. I threw open the door of the gloomy cedar parlour, because that was one in which Cecilia never sat.—“Ay, anywhere,” sighed he ; “all places are now the same to me—a palace, or a charnel-house.”—Yet he involuntarily bent his steps towards his own apartment, whither I watchfully attended him; for, alas ! no other friend was near to prevent any emotion of frenzy or despair. He now cast his eyes on me, and now on the door, with an expression which I clearly understood.—“Pardon me, my Lord,” sighed I, “if I *dare* not leave you. Ah! who can better know all you now suffer? for who has more severely felt the same cala-

mity?"—The flood of tears that I shed called forth his. He folded me as a brother in his arms; and resting his head on my shoulder, wept like a child.—"Promise," continued I, "that you will guard yourself from despair :—promise this for your children's sake,—for——." I would have added for *your Cecilia's*, but a something which I could not conquer impeded speech. It seemed as if that name, so familiar, so dear to both, had no longer a meaning ; or, if any, one too sacred and sublime for utterance.—"I have seen her die, Mrs. Forrester," cried he : "I have seen that life depart which I would have given my own to prolong. Since I have been cursed enough to survive her last moment, I will struggle to wait for my own."—

I appeared satisfied with this assurance, and quitted his apartment, which has from that moment been shut against every one. Not even Mr. Trevilian will he see, who came here with his lady this morning in their way from Paris. Ah,

little did they guess the scene of sorrow into which they were plunging ! Mrs. Trevilian staid only a few minutes ; but her husband kindly remained, in the hope of hereafter soothing Lord Westbury's bitter affliction.

Lady Sarah, who arrived on the evening of the fatal day, has ordered that our lost angel should lie in state : which I have no power to controvert ; or so well do I know the simple dignity of the soul thus torn from us, that this should not be allowed. Lady Sarah, perhaps, thinks all the ceremonies that attended the first wife of Lord Westbury are due alike to the second.

Alas ! do we need the pageantries of death to enforce our sense of its horrors ? or does the futility of human grandeur need such an exemplification ? Can pomp give any grace to her when dead, who never thought that she could receive any from it while living ? When did escutcheoned canopies, or swathed satin, preserve for a single hour that

withering half of us which so soon resolves into its own element? Yet was our Cecilia so elegant that death levels her not with the many. I wander to the chamber early and late, when all other persons are absent. I kneel by her—weep—pray; and find an indulgence in my sorrow. I kiss the cold lips which so lately gave efficacy to virtue, and find that they still retain the power by a holy and heartfelt communication.

Worshipped as she still is by the poor, to whom the ear and the hand of our friend were alike open, I have listened to their supplications, and allowed each to carry to her coffin the little tribute of a grateful heart. She is covered with the last flowers of the season, and precious are the dews in which the givers steep them. Yet let us not pity her whose portion here so often gave her a foretaste of that allotted to her hereafter. Rather may we revere the mercy which, early snatching her from temptation, sickness, and sorrow, bade her pure

spirit exhale upon the very bosom of felicity. It is only when they bring the babe to me that I am utterly inconsolable. I have taken him to my own bosom. Oh, that it may be permitted to me to rear the last of my Cecilia!—my very heart seems to send forth its energies to preserve him.

Mr. Milward committed to me on the day following that which impoverished us for ever—a packet containing several letters: all were left open for my perusal, and they are to be delivered when I shall think them more likely to soothe than wound those to whom they are addressed. I confide the whole to you, to be returned with your opinion on the time when my Lord's ought to be given. That to Captain Percival I request you to seal and deliver, while his feelings may impress its subject; and that you will not, for obvious reasons, mention the packet to Miss Rivers. Poor Marianne! I write to her too by this messenger.

POSTHUMOUS LETTERS.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

AT the moment when my swelling heart with tears of grateful fondness acknowledges that friendship which circumstances have often made the only, and always the great, comfort of my life, I am selfishly seeking to increase my debt to my Amelia. The rich have adopted a method of confiding to some one chosen person the disposition of the treasures which they have amassed ; and to whom shall the heart commit the charge of all it values but to the dear associate whom it has so often tried ?

To you then, my friend (for I will yet make a claim which, while we are upon earth, allies us to angels), to

you do I entrust the most delicate of all offices—that of soothing the deep anguish which I must, alas! on some day not very distant, occasion to the man whom my fond soul idolizes. You are, both by nature and situation, peculiarly adapted to the melancholy employment. Oh! watch over my beloved incessantly;—let not disappointment fix a gloom upon his ardent mind;—let not unmitigated grief prey upon his constitution;—choose those moments which nature has gifted women with a peculiar perception to discover, to insinuate yourself into his sorrows; and engage him to unfold a heart which will otherwise corrode in silence. I am not unapprised of the difficulty of the task; but I well know that my Amelia has generosity to make the effort, together with a sensibility which will insure her success: Lord Westbury will not fail in time to perceive the merit of her exertion. Ah! I know that I need not urge him to recompense it. May his perpetuated friendship towards my dear-

est friend and her family, reward her in this life, and finally unite their hearts by those holy ties which we humbly hope we may bear into a better !

Send the letter to Captain Percival immediately. May it become the means of my sister's happiness ! but never let her learn that it was so. I would not have one painful feeling blend with the joy of being the choice of the man whom she loves, should he on conviction prefer her.

I must now proceed to my last request. Oh, Amelia ! my hand—my nerves—my eyes—my heart, at once seem to fail me ! A little being who may yet share the fate impending over its mother, may yet, perhaps, survive her.—I cannot proceed !— Alas ! I reproach myself for thus yielding to a weakness for an unknown creature, that fortitude which I have preserved, while speaking of him to whom it owes existence. Let its total helplessness serve to excuse the melancholy preference.

Should I not be allowed to press this

dear unborn infant to a mother's bosom,
take it, my Amelia, to your own:—accept
this, I will hope, *living legacy*—adopt the
early orphan—nurture, rear, and guide the
last of her who thus asserts her rights in
you beyond the grave.—To add another
syllable would be to insult my generous
friend.

In the larger packet I have collected
all my imperfect plans for educating
those sweet girls, who, should they some-
times remember that they were born of
another mother, will not surely forget the
tenderness with which my heart adopted
them.—Yet a fear of this nature often
obtrudes, shocks, and distresses me: to
obviate it wholly, will be your task;—study
to bind their young hearts to that of my
child, by all those noble sentiments which
often supply the tie of blood, and always
greatly strengthen that.—I superadd a
short address, which, should any early
differences arise, may conciliate either
party: for the thoughts of those who are

dust, will sometimes have an awful influence on the survivors.

And now I conclude.—Full of the most tender sentiments for those who make my happiness in this world, and resting a pious hope on Him who promises to make it in that to come, I submit myself to his dispensations; and take a long, although I hope not an eternal, farewell of the beloved names of your friend, and

CECILIA WESTBURY.

TO THE BELOVED CHILDREN OF LORD
WESTBURY.

ACCEPT, my two darling girls, of the last testimony I can give you of an affection inferior only to that which I must ever bear your father. Judge of its ardour and sincerity, when it induces me to devote almost the last hours of my life to the service for which happily I was born: nor can I ever be grateful enough to God,

for allotting to me an office that made at once both my merit and my happiness.

When, under the tender tuition of the best of parents, and those whom his judgement shall select to assist him, you both become, what I humbly hope you will both live to be, accomplished young women ; remember, with regret, her who would have rejoiced in every good that may befall you, and partially behold her in the youngest of the family.

And you too, unknown offspring of the passion which most sublimes humanity—oh ! if the life which seems to throb so fast from your mother's bosom into yours, be lent you to maturity, imbibe with that too her affections ; be as she would then have been, the tenderest friend of your father—the dearest companion of your sisters—the child at once and the protector of Mrs. Forrester.

May He, whose unerring wisdom now separates us, guard, bless, and protect you all, till the moment ordained to restore each severally to

CECILIA WESTBURY !

TO LORD WESTBURY.

A THOUSAND internal symptoms of weakness and decay, continually remind me, my best beloved, of a danger which the erroneous kindness of my friends would studiously conceal. I have long judged it prudent to suffer them to deceive themselves, while they fancied that they deceived me; but I have always considered it as my first duty to fortify my mind against that trying moment, when parting nature calls upon memory for support, and sinks or rises by the awful fiat of conscience.

To enjoy the blessings allotted to us by Providence, is but the simple dictate of reason; to resign them without repining, is ordained to be the test of piety. This is the noblest exertion of human faculties—the solemn end for which they were chiefly given: impressed with this conviction, I have long been contending

with my frail and feeble nature--nor wholly, I trust, in vain. As I must ever believe the ties of virtue to be indissoluble, what is death but a finer spun ligament, which, though invisible, cannot be broken?

Prosperity must indeed have changed my character, if, after having long and often abjured your sight, while the choice rested solely in my own will, and human frailty, combating with the sense of right, embittered the best determination with regret;—prosperity must indeed have changed me, had I now less fortitude. Engrossed by reflections like these, I have sometimes found my feelings decay with my constitution, till a soft and universal enfeeblement came over me.—This world would then appear as a place afar off: and I seemed, as it were, between heaven and earth, with a something attracting me to each; till your loved presence destroyed the equilibrium, and centered all my thoughts and wishes in their first, their last, their only object.—Yet, in the humble

hope that the Author of all good does not require from me a perfection which he has not enabled me to attain, I humbly resign myself to his will. Oh, that I may have power to communicate to your heart the pious impulses of mine!

I well know that all addresses of this kind are stamped as vain or affected by the multitude : but can it be wrong to use, while yet we can command it, that reason which we know not how to ensure to ourselves for a single hour ? Friends fondly attached, set not out on the shortest journey without an affectionate farewell ; how then shall I undertake the long one before me in silence ? I have always felt that it would be impossible for me to utter, or you to remember, many things which it is of importance to both to know : and although this last testimony of my love will at first increase your affliction, it will surely in time minister comfort to you, by proving that I was not without it, at the most trying of moments.

Receive then, my master, friend, lover, husband—(oh ! I would find a name yet more expressive, for these are all, all too poor to satisfy my overflowing affection)—the last, the most fervent acknowledgement of a heart made greatly happy in you, and by you : and let the consciousness of meriting this testimony hallow the anguish which it may at the moment occasion.

As I am still flattered with the hope of becoming a mother, and fondly fancy that my child will survive, fain, fain would I enchain you to existence by that new tie. To the unknown infant, I transmit every claim I have on your affection : but, oh ! beware how you rob it of a last parent. Should I bring you a son, he will of consequence engage your immediate care, and I dare believe your attachment : but should I add a daughter to the dear ones whom you already possess, remember that they all will require a watchful observation ; and I trust that they will unite hereafter to repay it with

those nameless feminine assiduities, so heart-touching in the wearisome moments of suffering.

I shall not here descant on points which we have mutually considered, and only intreat that you will educate the precious children far from the follies of the great world, till they know how to judge of folly. Subdue the little pride of condition, by levelling them with others of their years, and making intellect the only source of pre-eminence. This petty arrogance is chiefly cherished by the servility of domestics, and often, by their officious ignorance, it is at an early age rendered incurable. No price is too high to pay for good sense; and as that is not confined to rank, let those who have charge of your children be distinguished by the first of advantages, if money can buy it. Subject them, in a word, to the authority of no woman whom you should have been ashamed to own as their mother. This to *you* is an unerring test.—Anxious as I am that

children so dear to us both should be happy, I am yet more anxious to render them deserving of happiness : and while I would lavish upon them every rational indulgence, I would strictly withhold whatever interferes with their future welfare. The character resulting from this kind of education may not have the brilliancy which is often at once so attractive to others, and so fatal to its possessor: but it will charm all whom it ought to charm, and supply in self-esteem a resource against the vanity, ambition, and lassitude, which unite to render half the sex of woman frail or wretched, and too often both.

Mrs. Forrester (who, with her little family, I know to be sufficiently assured of your regard in possessing mine) will, I doubt not, have the goodness to preside over your household till you give it a mistress: and in the most perfect security that the woman whom you distinguish will be worthy of yourself, I disdain a word

that might imply a doubt of your perpetuated attachment. Wedded still to my soul I would have you remain, but not to my ashes. No, my love, check not your affections—let your generous nature glow to the latest moment of existence. Seek a new object to make happy, nor think that your Cecilia would wish it otherwise. There is a lady to whom, were it possible to bequeath the hand and heart so inexpressibly dear—but her own rashness has decided her fate, and I am spared a painful effort over myself.

And now, my Edward, I comprise a thousand unutterable softnesses in the poor word—adieu ! Happy as you have made my days, be all that remain of your own, till, full of years and honours, you resign a name which your virtues will have sanctified, and ascend to that perfect re-union which, only by a tie more extended than marriage, links all the good !

Thus, to her latest breath, will pray,
your faithful, your own

CECILIA WESTBURY.

TO EDWARD PERCIVAL, ESQ.

I HAVE often meditated, Sir, upon the delicate subject which induces an address that will, perhaps, be trying to your feelings at present; but, I would fain hope, gratifying to them hereafter. That internal sense of decorum which *one* circumstance alone could obviate, has rendered me silent thus long.

I have not forgotten that there was a moment when Captain Percival found me without distinction, fortune, or any of the adventitious goods of life. Spirits, health, all seemed lost to me for ever. Yet at that melancholy moment he gave me the merit which he was pleased to

discover; and this generosity could not but have weight on a mind not devoid of that quality. When at length, Sir, you ventured to avow your attachment, I felt fully convinced of it: and, impressed with sentiments of high esteem, I injudiciously gave you reason to conclude that, under other circumstances, I could have loved you. I thought this candour to be the least return I could make to your unfortunate passion; but I soon felt that I had doubly erred. I had flattered a weakness which a more steady conduct would have cured; and proudly stifled those struggles in my own bosom which I rather should have avowed. Wedded in mind, from the first hour I ever saw him, to the generous man who had never ceased to deserve my whole heart, the spark which lent lustre to my life sunk into my very soul, and animates that, perhaps, even now.

I could not but perceive that, although I was lost to you for ever, you regarded me with a fervor which neither

time, disappointment, nor alienation, was able to extinguish; and which the nobleness of your nature, not to mention the purity of my own, made your mental misfortune. A certain delicacy due to my heart, and a decorum alike due to my situation, united to silence me upon a subject which admitted not of discussion. Those delicacies—those ties, subsist no longer; and the truth need not now be sunk between us. You have lived to behold the man whom you lately thought so happy, more unfortunate than yourself, in first obtaining, and then losing, the chosen of his heart: for, oh! believe me, great is the difference between resigning for ever a wife, or the woman whom you only wish to make so.

Disgusted with society, you have sometimes delivered up the nobler powers of your nature to the sickly reveries of an overcharged fancy; and, far from being grateful for all the advantages which nature or fortune could bestow upon you, it has seemed to you a virtue not to re-

pine. Alas ! perhaps this error has been more easily perceived by me, because it was first my own. Happily I checked myself in time, and was rewarded by a felicity which I hardly dared to hope for. Frustrate not, my dear Sir, the ordinations of Providence, by closing the heart which it is the delight of the Almighty to expand. This whole creation seems to have originated in his sublime desire of diffusing the felicity seated in, and issuing from, himself. He bountifully made his prevailing principle that of those beings whom he formed in his own express image. Erroneous custom, and a weak indulgence of selfish passions, sometimes will obscure this glorious principle, which is ever the source of our most exquisite, as well as innocent, enjoyments : but are they therefore lost to us ?—alas ! no. It is true, that the toil of conquest must then precede the sweets of triumph, and that conquest must be over our own foibles. Yet, oh ! when this is achieved, how delightful is the feeling !—human

nature seems to partake of the purity of immortality; and the chastened soul finds nothing within or without but innocence, peace, and that divine energy which such inmates alone can give. It feels and confesses in existence itself a charm: nor is it insensible to that invisible chain which draws us nearer to our Creator--the love of society--equally in the restricted and extended sense of the word:—the one naturally producing in generous minds the other. Those pains which we have voluntarily endured to serve our fellow-creatures, soften into pleasures at the trying hour when all other pleasures forsake us. They bless the present, endear the past, and make the future cheerful:—sufficient proofs that the origin of this principle is indeed divine.

A life of virtue is a life of action; for where is the merit of unyielding goodness, if no temptation induces a struggle? Who would compare an useless anchorite, with a tender, pious, provident parent?

Example is one demand of Heaven upon all whom it endues with superior intellect: but, as even our duties have their conciliatory endearments, pride gives one to every privation.

Surely of all created beings that man is the most virtuous, and most happy, whose death-bed is encircled by a well-educated, tender family, whom he offers up to the God before whose throne he is preparing to appear, with the sacred sense of having fulfilled his duty, which alone can give calmness to the pang of parting nature: for, whilst it preserves every charm to this world, it takes from the other every fear.

How hard is it to impress upon our fluctuating minds the often-repeated maxim, that content rests only in the will; and that the will must be always the victim of the passions, unless in time we find courage to subdue them! While I present to your mind this important truth, oh! forget not the circumstances under which I enforce it.

I have often observed in you that first distinction in refined natures—the same reluctance to give pain which those of a more selfish character shew to feeling it. Can I then fail to conclude, that if you supposed there existed a woman of virtue and merit, who cherished in secret for you a similar partiality to that which she saw you cherish vainly for another, you would not, by a glorious effort over yourself, give the guidance of your heart to your reason ; and thus, while you had the blessed consciousness of becoming the happiness of another, you would have a moral conviction that you had taken the best chance for your own ?

If such, on this interesting occasion, could be your conduct, believe my observations not wholly without an object : if otherwise, I rely on your delicacy not to affix one to them :—and to all I have said I can add only my affectionate wishes—my parting prayers.

As a friend, as a brother, I ever valued—nay, in the amplest, and most libe-

ral sense of the word—loved you. May the last dictates of a feeling which virtue sanctioned, and the grave will have hallowed, influence your heart to the purest purpose ! and, oh ! may Heaven bestow on you a fate happy as that which I am about to resign ! It is among the last wishes, beating at my heart, that I may be permitted to aid a felicity which I was not born to constitute.

Adieu, dear and amiable Percival ! adieu for ever ! since, before this can reach your hands, all remaining of the writer will be the name of

CECILIA WESTBURY.

HERE terminated a long correspondence : but as the surviving characters may excite an interest in the mind of the reader, a brief sketch is subjoined of their various fates.

LORD WESTBURY indulged in a grief so silent and profound, as sometimes to alarm those who loved him, for his intellects. He directed that Cecilia should be embalmed ; and gave no more of her to the earth than what he could not withhold from it. The dome library in the gardens of Arlington he converted into her mausoleum ; and there, for a length of time, he spent a considerable portion of every day. Although a sumptuous monument to the first Lady Westbury had been erected in the church, Lord Westbury would never consent to raise another to his second wife ; which much shocked those humble adorers of the virtues of Cecilia, in whose estimation these empty honours are often rated high.

Whenever it was indispensable for Lord Westbury to respect his friends by mixing in their society, the abstraction and apathy of his manners evidently

proved that life, from a good, had become to him a mere burden. A partiality which Cecilia had shewn for the name of Edmund induced Lord Westbury to give it to his infant son ; who, unhappily, appeared to inherit the delicacy of his mother's habit : nor could a nurse less tender, watchful, and anxious, than Mrs. Forrester, have reared the babe. While the fear of losing the child impressed the family circle, it gave those of whom it was composed relief to see how little his loss would, in all probability, have added to the grief of that father whose feelings seemed wholly engrossed by the angel who had borne him. At an early age the heir caught the small-pox, and having gone through that peril with safety, his constitution each following day gained vigour, and his complexion bloom. As every grace became visible in his person and manners, every virtue took root in his soul. The tenderness of Cecilia's nature seemed to have passed into that of her son ; whose affection and rever-

ence towards his father won, at length, the fondest return. Lord Westbury's affections waked from the dangerous lethargy, and again gave him that chastened felicity which fortunate fathers owe to good children. Although national contingencies sometimes obliged him to visit London, Arlington Court continued to be his chief residence, and the library his solitary retreat. Whenever his susceptible heart overflowed, on perceiving any promise of that early excellence which his son displayed, thither would the tender father retire, to share, as he said, the sadly sweet emotion with his Cecilia :—a fond delusion, by which he kept up an ideal intercourse with the lost object of his choice. In some of those periods of fond seclusion he penned the poetical memorial of conjugal love with which this work concludes.

Mrs. Forrester, deservedly the bosom friend of Lady Westbury, verified that hope which she at the hour of death so

fondly expressed. From the enlargement of Mrs. Forrester's mind, she comprehended in friendship every human duty; and lived but for the comfort of Lord Westbury, and the advantage of his children. Her situation in his family totally prevented that lonely dreariness which is so often observable in houses from whence a premature death has snatched the mistress. Her own life knew no other variety than that of travelling with the young folks from one seat to the other: for the opinion of Cecilia became a law to her Lord, who determined to keep his daughters out of the circle of high life, till their tastes should be formed, and their principles fixed. A widow, with a young family, for whom she could make but a slender provision, seldom excites more than esteem. No importunate lover ever gave weight to those declarations which Mrs. Forrester frequently made against a second marriage; yet all her friends confided in their sincerity.

The Duchess of Fernham passed her

youth in that high estimation which a beautiful woman who has every temptation to err, usually obtains, if she resists seduction. The education of her daughter, as it was her first duty, soon became her only pleasure.

Sir George Clifford, who had been one cruel cause of his brother's irretrievable calamity, derived not even a reversionary advantage from the death of Cecilia. The babe whom his uncle had taken such pains, ere yet he saw the light, to deprive of existence, survived to exclude that uncle from the estate and title which he had so greatly coveted. The activity of Sir George was soon exercised in a new pursuit, which he followed up with equal assiduity ; but the most servile acquiescence in the will of the minister failed to obtain for him the object in view : and after Sir George had obviously descended to be a political tool, he was left to endure popular obloquy. The pleasures of sense became his next object ; and as those for ever increase in

their demands, he soon lived but for his appetites. Inebriety usually produces forgetfulness ; and a cold he took from having slept on damp turf, when intemperance had thrown his blood into a state of inflammation, deprived the young voluptuary of the use of his limbs. Bath became his residence, as the waters supplied his only hope of cure : but the complication of his maladies defied even their power. This wretched, guilty man, was condemned to be wheeled day after day, year after year, to the pump-room, in his gouty chair ; either to learn or to tell the news of the day, and thus keep up a cold intercourse with society. Habit had made sensuality now so necessary to him, that neither the certainty of a diseased existence, nor a miserable death, could induce him to deny himself the double indulgence of gluttony and epicurism. Being justly abandoned by relations whom he had both injured and disgraced, and without one human being near him who had any interest in his feelings or wel-

fare, he made at once a servant of his mistress, and a mistress of his servant; for the vulgar woman to whom he gave both titles, exercised over him boundless authority, and amassed a fine fortune by restricting his expences in every instance but the indulgence of the table. Sir George Clifford, worn to old age at six-and-thirty, quitted the existence which he had debased; and went to the grave an object as loathsome as he was contemptible. That weak but unfortunate wife, whose estates during life he could withhold, but not alienate, now emerged from her solitary confinement, and rushed once more into the gay world; where she was soon addressed by the worthless valet whom she knew to have been suborned to betray her; but that conviction did not prevent her from bestowing on him her hand and fortune. His avarice, brutality, and tyranny, became her just punishment.

Two years elapsed before Captain Percival could enough forget the ad-

mired creature who had even in death so affectingly remembered him, as to consider the contents of a letter which clung to his heart. He needed no guide to discover whom he could make happy : and having wrought his mind up to supposing that it might eventually become a melancholy pleasure to fulfil one of the last wishes of Lady Westbury, he tendered his hand to Miss Rivers. Lord Westbury immediately made such an addition to the little fortune which Cecilia had secured to Marianne, as shewed that he still considered her as his sister : and thus was she a match for Percival in every thing but heart. As her husband, however, no longer expected the exquisite felicity which he had hoped for in his first choice, he lived on terms of affection and amity with his wife. Accustomed to see Lord Westbury's son continually, on whom his attachment for Cecilia devolved, Captain Percival did not regret the want of offspring. The young Edmund had a devoted regard

for his uncle, for thus was he early taught in fondness to term Captain Percival. A wound which he received in action, shortened his life. He bequeathed Orange-hill, and its domains, to his favourite Edmund, after the demise of his widow, who survived him only three years and a half.

Lady Harington became a widow a few months after the death of Cecilia, and the maternal guardian of one son and a daughter. The affection she continued to cherish for Lady Westbury, made her anxious to collect and arrange the Letters here given : a number of which she obtained from having found among the papers of Sir George several billets from Miss Eliza Rivers, whom he had added to his many favourites. Money procured from that wretched and dissolute young woman, who was then confined within the King's-bench prison, her own Letters, and those of Lady Kil-larney. Mrs. Forrester, and Lady Harington, contributed their share of the

correspondence ; and Lord Westbury possessed whatever more might be necessary to form a due series of memoirs.

From among these Letters, have been selected such only as will illustrate a character often painfully thrown upon itself, and struggling to perform its duties. Cecilia is already dust—but these portraits of her soul will preserve its features, when those of her face shall fade both upon the imagination and canvas. She is not among those fancy-formed beings, who are made as superior to the little as the great frailties of humanity :—such are perhaps as unnecessary as they are unnatural.—What human being has been without a fault ? but the faults of mortality are various in their nature, and infinite in their kinds and degrees. The conduct of Lady Westbury will by different dispositions be termed weak or noble ; but let it be remembered that her fate is like her character—compound-ed :—and sorrow is as often the consequence of her errors, as happiness of her

virtues. The incidents of her life are meant to convey a moral, which can hardly be given in stronger words than those used by herself:—That the judgment which we pass upon others, ought to be considered as the test of our humanity; since we impeach the goodness of our own hearts, if we do not doubt as long as doubt is possible.

To reputation, life owes its ostensible value; and women their whole acceptance in society. In a court of justice, no culprit, though brought to the bar, can be convicted without the fullest proof of guilt; and surely he must be the meanest of mankind, who governs his own bosom by laws more rigid than those which govern his country.

A MONODY

ON THE DEATH OF A BELOVED WIFE.

HOURS, days, and months, are gone, alas ! since
Death

Exhausted in one sigh thy balmy breath ;
Effaced the smile that once all hearts could warm ;
For ever closed those eyes which opened but to charm.
Yet unconsol'd, and lonely, still I leave
The couch whence sleep and thou together fled ;
O'er thy belov'd resemblance still to grieve,
Till fancy, to augment my pain,
Sees crimson life return again,
And animates the dead :—
From the wild trance I start—alas ! to find
I have thy dust alone—its own pure Heav'n thy mind.
Yet let me treasure all now mine :—no grave
Thy graceful form shall ever have !
No marble tomb shall bear thy name,
To catch the idle eye ;
Or seek by vulgar means for vulgar fame !

Thy only monument my heart shall be ;
 Thy only epitaph—my memory.

Nor to the world yet shalt thou die,
 Though early torn from me :
 All of thy loss I can supply
 Is an unbounded charity ;
 While, as thy succours I impart,
 With tears the poor deplore
 That cold is now the gen'rous heart
 Which ne'er was cold before.—
 Yet from their lips a nobler fame
 Shall consecrate thy name,
 Than waits on those bright comets of a day,
 Who useless blaze awhile, then pass away ;
 Who, soon neglected and forgot,
 In sculptur'd piles magnificently rot.

What scene can give the widow'd soul relief ?
 What melody can still the sob of grief ?
 Wildly I gaze around ; nor hope to rest
 My sight, but on some spot which thou hast blest.—
 Yon vacant mirror never more shall shew
 That form where symmetry with grace combined ;
 No more for me instruct each charm to glow :
 Ah ! needless effort, since thy charm was mind.—
 That book—thy passport to the gates of bliss—
 A thousand soft afflictions must impart ;
 For ever greeted with a mournful kiss,
 For ever press'd with reverence to my heart.

Not useless did the sacred volume lie ;
 Alike it taught thee how to live, and die.
 Have I not, oh! my love ! when faint with pain,
 Beheld thee, kneeling, pour the pious strain
 Unfalt'ring and sedate, till thy fond care
 Breathed for thy husband the unfinish'd pray'r ?
 How would thy heart's warm flood then tinge thy
 cheek,
 And thy eyes tell what language could not speak !

Oh ! had I known, like thee, to prize the store
 Of good posset, nor vainly wished for more ;—
 Like thee, submissive kiss'd fair Fortune's hand ;—
 Years might have followed years, ere death had
 hurled
 The dart which sever'd love's most tender band,
 And made to me a desert of the world.—
 But of all fates I blindly sought the worst,
 And in my granted wishes am completely curst.

One hour, one happy, happy hour,
 Resign'd thee to these faithful arms,
 Rich in youth and virgin charms ;
 And each that follow'd, but increas'd thy pow'r :
 No cold distrust our joys o'ercast,
 We loved as youth and life could ever last.
 Yet scarce those wreaths their bloom had shed
 Which Hymen willing wove
 Around our bridal bed,
 Ere Death his pale rose twined among the red.

Where softest love had reign'd alone,
 He fixed his everlasting throne,
 And changed the couch of bliss sincere
 Into a cold and melancholy bier.—
 Yet, ah ! thy voice, with pow'r endued
 Still, still to soothe and share
 The pangs of my despair,
 With agonising fondness strove
 To speak,—and thy last word was love !
 But, oh ! how dire the silence which ensued !

In vain, alas ! with feeble cries
 Thy new-born self asserts his claim :—
 Meet not, unhappy babe ! his eyes
 Who shudders at a father's name.
 ——Yet, oh ! on that dear purchase of each joy,
 All that remains of thee—our infant boy,
 May Heav'n thy share of bliss bestow !
 Endue him with thy pious mind,
 Thy gen'rous warmth, thy melting heart,
 A sense as exquisite of human woe,
 As restless a desire to heal the smart :
 So shall I my lone pilgrimage sustain
 Till death, which sever'd, join our hearts again.

Within thy last—thy solemn shrine,
 Must I for ever, ever dwell,
 Like a cold hermit in his cell,
 His worshipp'd saint not more remote than mine.

—There, when sad slumbers seal my eyes,
Thy angel-form again may rise ;
Again my eager ear thy voice may find,
And thy wan visage warm again with mind.
Thro' sleep and Fancy's pow'r 't is giv'n
To range thro' earth, or soar to heav'n ;
And when these soothing visions beam,
I only wish my life were one long dream.

F I N I S.

